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CECIL HOUSES

[INCORPORATED]

10th REPORT
• 1937-8



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Pamphlet

CECIL HOUSES

**WOMEN'S PUBLIC LODGING-HOUSE FUND
INCORPORATED UNDER THE BOARD OF TRADE**

**TENTH
REPORT
1937-8**



Offices:
**11 GOLDEN SQUARE
LONDON
W. 1.**

TELEPHONE: GERRARD 3391

363.592060421 CEC

CECIL HOUSES

(INCORPORATED)

WOMEN'S PUBLIC LODGING-HOUSE FUND

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EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE :

THE LADY LOVAT, *Chairman.*
 D. G. SOMERVILLE, ESQ., M.P., *Hon. Treasurer.*
 MRS. CECIL CHESTERTON, O.B.E., *Hon. Organising Secretary.*
 THE HON. MARGARET BIGGE.
 JOHN CARGILL, ESQ.
 MAJOR J. BRUNEL COHEN.
 MRS. DENSTON FENNELLE.
 REV. T. J. FITZGERALD.
 MISS HELEN HOPE.
 RAOUL NICOLE, ESQ.
Asst. 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 :

THE HON. MARGARET BIGGE, *Chairman.*
 MRS. C. P. BLACKER.
 MRS. K. E. BOUGHEY.
 MRS. CECIL CHESTERTON, O.B.E.
 MRS. J. BRUNEL COHEN.
 MRS. H. FLETCHER.
 MISS HELEN HOPE.
 MRS. W. H. POWELL.
 MRS. DENZIL TWENTYMAN.

OFFICE :

11 Golden Square, London, W.1.

Telephone No. : Gerrard 3391.

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.

HOUSES

Nos. 34/35 Boswell Street, Theobald's Road, W.C.1.
Tel. No. : Holborn 5711.

Nos. 47/51 Wharfedale 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.

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

3800171842

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.

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).*

Tenth Report

1937-8

WHAT WE ARE DOING

Our first and much loved house in Devonshire Street has been re-christened. The L.C.C. has renamed it 34/35 Boswell Street, Holborn, W.C.1, though it is dubious whether the biographer of Dr. Johnson habitually walked that way. The Queen Anne atmosphere still lingers in the district, though the gracious old dwellings are rapidly giving place to modern buildings.

Our new house, with its blue tiles and orange paint, strikes a new note, but gives as kindly a welcome to the wayfarer as its pleasing predecessor. The sitting-room is larger, for we can now accommodate fifty guests in addition to four babies, and a dormitory on the ground floor saves our old ladies the worry of the stairs. Our original Matron is back again and gathers round her a nightly flock of young and old alike.

The opening ceremony was performed in October, by the Lord Mayor of London, when the Mayor and Mayoress of Holborn were present, with members of our committees. A report of the speeches will be found on pp. 14.

Soon after our re-establishment we had a wonderful surprise. Queen Mary intimated a wish to pay the new house a private visit. It will be remembered that Her Majesty went over the original Devonshire Street building, and it is a happy augury that Boswell Street should have had the same distinction.

Her Majesty saw the whole House and was shown the up-to-date improvements and alterations, including spacious cupboards and more ample wardrobe room for the clothes, shoes, etc., sent by friends for our lodgers.

The arm-chair for the Matron's use, given by Queen Mary at our first opening ten years ago is still in good condition, but after inspection Her Majesty decided it should have new springs and most generously promised to defray the cost of the repairs which were carried out by an upholstress working on her own and in great need of employment.

Her Majesty brought special gifts for the lodgers and the House, which are keenly and individually appreciated.

The faithful voluntary helpers who make tea, etc., when the assistant is off duty are back again at Boswell Street and at the

other Houses, year after year, our workers continue their kindly and unflagging interest, associating themselves with the special needs of each.

The interest in Cecil Houses is constantly extending. Requests for speakers are frequent and the response from the majority of meetings addressed is spontaneous and encouraging. Members of the Women's Co-operative and other societies visit the Houses in large parties, and their enthusiasm for the work has led to wider publicity and increased support.

Parcels of clothing brought by these visitors to a special House will sometimes contain small quantities of tea, a little packet of sugar, which mean extra comforts for our lodgers, though often the generous donor herself has straitened means.

Friends continue to give treats to their favourite House—tea and supper and concert parties and sometimes a hot dinner cooked by the staff and very much enjoyed, make highlights in a monotonous round of homelessness.

Christmas Day is still a peak in the social life of Cecil Houses. Thanks to our friends the annual dinner in 1937 was good and plentiful and the cider 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 on a particularly foggy day is deeply appreciated by us all.

Queen Mary graciously remembering Cecil Houses sent lovely presents for the women and children, and the delight and happiness they brought was very good to see.

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

"Xmas Day passed off very quietly and happily—not forgetting the good breakfast of ham sandwiches that commenced the day. The gifts of Queen Mary, which were drawn for, gave great pleasure. The concert party singing was much enjoyed, also the clever little dancer. In fact everyone had a lovely Xmas."

"Xmas festivities went off very well. The biscuits, sweets, cake and oranges sent to us were much appreciated and the dinner was excellent. Every lodger thoroughly enjoyed herself."

"The women enjoyed the dinner and concert party very much and a good time was had by all. We had a number of presents as usual—cake, oranges, biscuits, sweets, holly and cigarettes and the place was a real home."

"We received parcels for bran tub and cake. We had a very enjoyable Xmas with plenty of good things to eat including the dinner. One of our lodgers was ill on Xmas morning. She could not speak and could not get up, but we persuaded her to go to hospital. She had not been here before and was very well dressed and well spoken."

"Everyone had a wonderful time with chocolates, cigarettes and jam, puddings, and the young ladies at County Hall gave mince-pies. Then we had Xmas tree gifts and lovely bon-bons. The Nativity crib from Germany was admired by all and everyone was very happy."

One House had a special New Year's celebration, of which Matron writes:—

"With the money sent by a friend we bought a joint of English beef and salads were provided by one of our helpers. Also mince pies and puddings, with plenty of sweets, fruit and bon-bons. We were festive up to midnight when we hailed the New Year with a cup of tea and Auld Lang Syne."

Changing times and economic fluctuations bring us an increasing number of young girls. One case, typical of many others, has no friends or relatives in London. She looks on our Waterloo Road House as home. A steady, hard-working girl, her small wages do not allow her to live in a residential hostel or even to take a permanent lodging. So for the present she stays with us, content and happy. She writes to us:—

"I am sending these few lines to thank you for your kindness to me before my Confirmation, which went off very nicely on Tuesday. Both you and Matron have been so kind towards me that I feel I should like to show how much I appreciate everything you both did for me. I was very pleased when I was recommended to Cecil Houses. I lost my parents when I was fourteen, so having had no home for a number of years, it hasn't been so good. But I am very pleased to say I have been very happy and comfortable during my stay here. So thanking you once again, I remain, Yours sincerely, H."

In these days when it is said that youth does not want help or counsel from their elders, it is pathetic how many little wrecks drift to the harbourage of Cecil Houses.

X, in the late twenties, arrived one evening looking very ill and nervously collapsed. She was obviously going to have a child but gave no confidences until a few days later. Without money or hope she broke down completely—what was she to do?

The Matron was able to arrange for her confinement in a local hospital and we kept her going with food until she was admitted.

' It is not always the young or the insecure who need a kindly hand. Early in the year Mrs. R., a nice-looking, well-dressed country woman about forty stayed two days in a Cecil House without a word. On the third morning she explained that with her money exhausted she must get work, and started off to look for a job.

Within ten minutes she was back, with her husband sheepishly behind her. He was not always sheepish. The New Year festivities in their home had over-excited him and on her remonstrance in favour of sobriety he had ordered her out of his house and his life.

He was so threatening in his manner—poor Dad had fallen a little while previously and hurt his head—that his wife was convinced that if she stayed he would do her bodily harm. She

rushed out then and there. She had heard of Cecil Houses and found the address in the waiting-room when she arrived at Waterloo Station.

Meanwhile, very much worried at not hearing from his wife Dad has come to London and was on his way to Scotland Yard to report her as missing when they met.

But as Mrs. R. explained, she was determined that he should come back and hear what Matron had to say. Her few remarks as to what "you lords of creation think that you can do" reduced him to contrition and husband and wife went off quite happily, arm in arm.

A few days later Matron received their joint thanks, with a photograph of the couple on their last summer holiday, affectionately smiling.

Our Matrons have been able, in certain cases, to obtain Public Assistance for some of our older lodgers who can earn but a few pence, cleaning, etc. The small sum granted weekly provides them with bed money and keeps them from the dreaded Institution.

Among our derelicts who have known better days is an accomplished pianist. Well educated, she cannot permanently keep off excessive drink, but between whiles she puts up at Cecil Houses where she plays for the amusement and delight of her fellow guests.

There is a sing-song too most evenings at Waterloo Road. Variety of taste demands hymn tunes, jazz and operatic numbers. All are satisfied and most of the audience join in.

A pianist at another House keeps her hands in training between engagements by early morning practise and our lodgers arise to the sound of cheerful melodies.

We still continue to put our lodgers in touch with possible employers:—

WITH THE CO-OPERATION OF FRIENDS AND SUPPORTERS WE HAVE BEEN ABLE SINCE WE STARTED, TO FIND EMPLOYMENT FOR 932 WOMEN AND GIRLS AS GENERAL SERVANTS, WAITRESSES, CHAMBERMAIDS, AND DAILY HELPS. THE MAJORITY OF THESE HAVE DONE VERY WELL.

The following is from a mistress who engaged a domestic from one of our Houses:—

"Dear Matron,

"I am sorry that I have not written before in order to thank you for your help. I believe Mrs. C. is getting used to our place, and she certainly seems to be very fond of our bonny John. You don't know in what a hole I was; it was pretty bad for three days and I believe I became completely



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THE BLESSING OF THE CITY OF LONDON

nervous and worried. Mrs. C. arrived a week ago and you were quite right when you told me that she looked rather sad—her laughter is, however, amazingly refreshing and very happy.

"I believe Mrs. C. is going to see you on Saturday afternoon and will probably tell you whether she likes it here.

"If, it is a big IF, I take the chance after Xmas to go to London, I shall give you a phone call and come to see you. I think I should like to meet you personally. For the time being my renewed thanks and very great appreciation. Yours sincerely, N.W."

The Matron's comment is :—

"Mrs. C. called on Saturday and seems very happy and wishes to thank Cecil Houses for their kindly shelter, and I am to say 'from despair once again she is climbing to happiness'."

In every way possible we try to establish human contacts with the women and girls who come to us so that when they are no longer with us they may still feel that there is always somewhere to go and someone to turn to.

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 Wharfdale 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 and Basnett Gallery (Liverpool) when Mr. J. A. Cairns (Thames Police

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

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 Barrett, 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. Sherriff; Commdr. Oliver Locker-Lampson, C.M.G., D.S.O., M.P.; Miss Maude Royden; Miss Peggy Ashcroft; Sir Cedric Hardwicke; Mr. Ian Hay; Mr. Adrian Moreing, M.P.; Miss Sheila Kaye-Smith; Miss Helena Pickard; Mr. Louis Golding; Mr. J. B. Priestley; Mr. Ernest Milton; Sir Thomas Beecham, Bart.; 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 and Mr. Robert Nichols spoke of the urgent need of beds for homeless women and in support of the work of Cecil Houses.

Cecil 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 1937 1500 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 a percentage of women of better education who have fallen on evil times. Others come up from the provinces either to join their husbands who have found work in London, or are looking for it, or in the hope of obtaining employment for themselves. For some of these the Committee have been able to find permanent lodgings.

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. The police make increasing use of Cecil Houses for stranded strangers and on more than one occasion help has been asked on behalf of girls and women from other countries who find themselves friendless in London and without English currency.

Since Cecil Houses opened some 691,338 beds and 39,403 cots have been occupied up to the end of February, 1938.

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 to 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. During the last two years a professional chiropodist has attended at Waterloo Road and by her skill and devotion has given unspeakable relief to the weary and calloused feet of those poor wanderers of the stony pavements.

We find that Cecil Houses are regarded more and more as the information centre for every kind of social inquiry. A supporter will ask where an old servant can find a home in her declining years; a railway official anxious to trace a woman to whom a widow's pension from the company is due asks the office to look up the records of past lodgers; a widower hopes we may be able to find a good reliable housekeeper to look after his children; social students from abroad wish to find contacts; welfare workers from the provinces want opportunities for investigation; nursing associations and others are anxious to study our methods. One of

our most frequent appeals is for the name of a suitable Hostel where a girl in regular employment may find board and lodging at a reasonable rate—alas, this is almost an insuperable difficulty when the inquirer earns but 18s. weekly.

All queries are 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., have asked 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. The Committee would like to make it known that they are only too pleased to arrange for speakers at afternoon or evening meetings who will have first-hand knowledge of the Houses, and also to supply literature for distribution, and collecting boxes to those who are good enough to help. Applications for speakers 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.**

WHAT WE HOPE TO DO

Ten years ago the founder of Cecil Houses drew public attention to the pitiful shortage of beds for the destitute woman. We have been able in some measure to meet the deficiency, which we hope still further to decrease. We feel, however, that our immediate aim should deal with the same problem from a new angle.

At the moment there is a complete lack of any kind of home for girls and women earning £1 a week or under. The average charge for bed and board in a hostel is from 22/6 to 25/- weekly, with a few at 18/-. This leaves the poorly paid workers, separated from their families, unprovided for. To-day hundreds of girls in

small cinemas and cafés, half-timers in multiple stores, work girls and junior typists have to choose between life in a public lodging-house or a room in a back street shared with three or four, without decent washing, cooking or sanitary accommodation, inadequate bedding and a general atmosphere of sordid misery. Without opportunities of healthy, social contacts or amusement, the girls, full of natural high spirits, wander the streets or the parks, haunt the cheap café bars and only too often make undesirable acquaintance with, in many cases, tragic results.

Employment is increasing in London but wages are decreasing, and every day recruits stream up from the country for jobs.

The urgency of human provision for these workers has induced the Committee to consider starting a residential club at a figure within the means of even the most poorly paid.

From the experience gained in the running of Cecil Houses Mrs. Cecil Chesterton estimates that once the cost of site, building, equipment, etc. is defrayed, a self-supporting club can be run at 14/6 per week per head, 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 part of the club and every care taken to afford the girls the kindly care and interest which should be part and parcel of the home.

But before embarking on this enterprise the Committee want to be assured of the sympathy and support of friends and subscribers and for this reason a public meeting will be held shortly in a London theatre when expressions of opinion will be asked.

It should be made plain that the Committee have no intention of devoting the future of Cecil House Inc. to the provision of residential clubs only. The care of the destitute still remains a first and foremost charge. But the immediate urgency of social needs becomes suddenly and startlingly apparent.

From all sides—from social workers, ministers, doctors and employers of labour—comes the complaint that the young girl earning less than 25/- weekly is forced to live for the most part in undesirable conditions.

It is with the knowledge that an increasing number of young things in steady employment are socially derelict for want of a cheap home that we are impelled to put the case for the consideration of our supporters.

Those of our public who desire to earmark their contribution to further lodging-houses only, may rest assured that their wishes will be carried out. Cecil Houses were started to meet the famine of beds and from this it is but a step to cope with the provision of self-supporting clubs.

We would ask all those who sympathise with the responsibilities of the older generation towards the youth of to-day to help us to the utmost to start the first Cecil Residential Club for Working Women and Girls.

March, 1938.

Re-Opening Ceremony at Cecil House

34/35 BOSWELL STREET, W.C.1
(LATE DEVONSHIRE STREET)

on

OCTOBER 7TH, 1937

*By the Rt. Hon. The Lord Mayor of London, supported by the Mayor
and Mayoress of Holborn*

THE OLD HOUSE—AND THE NEW

We are doing to-day what has almost become a habit ; that is, welcoming the Lord Mayor of London at the opening of a Cecil House. This is the sixth opening of a Cecil House that we have had since we started, and on four occasions the opening ceremony has been performed by the Lord Mayor of London. I can assure you, my Lord Mayor, that we are very grateful indeed to you for having come here to-day, because we know full well what your engagements must be. We also realise that, when it comes to the end of your year of office perhaps it is not as necessary to do things that you do not want to as it is at the beginning ; and therefore we do doubly appreciate your having come.

Of the other two opening ceremonies which have not been done by the Lord Mayor of London, one was performed by the Prime Minister, and the other by the then Home Secretary, Mr. Joynson Hicks, who later became Lord Brentford. I am sure that you will all be very glad to know that Lady Brentford is with us this afternoon. She has always shown great interest in Cecil Houses, and she is showing it once again by coming here to-day.

I do not want to tell you anything at all about the aims and objects of Cecil Houses. To start with, I think most of you here understand that—in this building there are somewhere between 700 and 800 people in the small rooms—and have for a long time past shown your sympathy for what we are trying to do ; but if any of you do not know what it is exactly that we are aiming at then Mrs. Cecil Chesterton is going to speak a little later on, and Mrs. Chesterton, as you all know, is the one person who is responsible for these Cecil Houses. She found the necessity and met it. It was from her peregrinations in the East End of London and in the poorer districts of London that the idea arose. The seed germinated in her, and now she may look on this very, very splendid monument of five of these wonderful houses. There are between

fifty and sixty beds in each House, and practically every night each one is occupied. I think she must be very proud indeed to-day, as I know she has been ever since the movement started. I have told you we have had six opening ceremonies. I also may just mention that this is our fifth House. You may wonder how that has happened. When the movement started, as a result of a meeting in October 1926, in the spring of 1927 we purchased, with money subscribed chiefly by the friends of Mrs. Chesterton, a house in Devonshire Street, No. 35 Devonshire Street. It was the first one that we had and, naturally, we were out to get it and open it quickly. But it was never in as good a condition as any of the others because the other ones we have had we have either built or have made very considerable alterations to. But, in the case of this particular house, we were very anxious to come in as quickly as we could, and we merely adapted it to our needs. The result was, about a year ago it was very nearly tumbling down, and I think if we had not condemned it ourselves the authorities might have come along and done it for us. As we had to pull it down we were able to purchase the house next door, No. 34 Devonshire Street. We gutted both those houses, 34 and 35, and then built this house on the double site. The old house only had 44 beds, but in this new one there are 50, with very much more space between each bed now than we had before. These rooms in which you are now sitting—and I hope that you will all visit the other rooms—are considerably larger, and there are many more of them than there were in the old house. Altogether, I feel sure, when you have been round, that you will think we have spent the money which you have all so kindly subscribed to us to the very best advantage.

May I say a word or two about that money, always rather an unpleasant thing to do, but I think you should know how much this place has cost us, in order that, so far from thinking you have subscribed enough, and thereby decreasing your subscription, you will perhaps, in the goodness of your heart, think that the time has come when you might double it in order that we may build even yet another house. This building, No. 35 Devonshire Street, when we first bought it, and by the time we had occupied it and adapted it, cost us over £4,000 ; that is just over ten years ago. Our ideas have altered. The standard which we set ourselves then has risen, and we want to do more for the women now than we did then. Also the material costs have gone up very considerably. When we bought No. 34, the house next door, that cost us £1,500 ; and to erect this building cost another £7,600 : so altogether this building, as you now see it, has cost us just over £9,000. It would have cost us more, only we were able to use most, if not all, of the equipment which we had in the old house ; but of course we had to increase it, because then there were 44, and now there are 50 beds.

There is one thing we have here now which we think is a very good thing, and you may think so, too, as you go round, and that is some steel lockers. We found that wooden lockers do not wear

very well, and that some of our ladies who come here bring guests with them who make themselves at home in wooden lockers. For a very long time we have been trying to find out the right sort of locker which would accept what we wanted, but not accept anything that we did not want, and we rather think that we have found it.

Before I stop may I just give you an idea of the number of beds let, which means the number of women to whom we have given accommodation? Since Cecil Houses started, just ten years ago, we have let 661,000 beds—661,000 women night after night have been found accommodation. This house, which was our first, which has been closed for just over a year, has let 120,000 beds. Before I ask you, my Lord Mayor, officially to open the house, may I say one word as regards the architect? The plans for this building were got out by Mr. Collins, of Knott and Collins—he has been interested in Cecil Houses from the very beginning, and it was his partner, Mr. Ralph Knott, who designed our first house—but, unfortunately, he was not able to see his plans carried out. They have been executed, and I think you will agree very well indeed, by Messrs. Gropius and Fry. They are our new architects, and I hope that they will be our architects for a very long time. Mr. Maxwell Fry is here now, and I think he will be very pleased to see the acclamation with which his building will be greeted.

I think that is all I want to say to you at the moment, and I will now ask the Right Hon. The Lord Mayor of London to declare the house open.

Major J. Brunel Cohen.

A JOY AND A BLESSING

I am, of course, very pleased to be here this afternoon to open this Cecil House, built on the site of the one which was first opened in 1927, also by the then Lord Mayor, because the work which Mrs. Cecil Chesterton and her committee are doing among the girls and women of the metropolis is one which should have the fullest support of those who are more fortunately placed, and I am delighted to give it the blessing of the City of London. Everyone has read Mrs. Chesterton's book, "In Darkest London"; and everyone with any imagination must realise the value of these homes for any woman in need of a night's rest who finds herself derelict and with nowhere to go, where beds and other facilities and comforts can be obtained with a kindly, unquestioning welcome. The splendid feature about these homes is that once the premises have been built and equipped—and those present at the re-opening ceremony are responsible for the funds that have made this house possible—each house becomes self-supporting. All who come to the house pay, if they can, a charge of one shilling a night; but if a woman



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H.M. QUEEN MARY AND MRS. CECIL CHESTERTON AT 34/35 BOSWELL STREET, W.C.1.

has not that amount she is not turned away, but a small Needy Fund contributed by friends is drawn upon for the necessary amount. The shillings contributed nightly by the homeless pay for every item: lighting, fire, groceries, and so on. Therefore, such a house as this is, in every sense, a real home for the time the women are in it. There is thus no feeling of charity in the cold sense of the term, but there is a feeling of encouragement of self-respect and independence, which those who use these houses, and this house, will appreciate.

H.M. Queen Mary has graciously taken an interest in these houses since their inception, and has given a special present for each one as it has been opened. The arm-chair, for instance, and umbrella-stand which she presented to the first house on this site are once again in their old familiar places.

As Major Brunel Cohen has told you, there are now five of these Houses open, and it is my earnest hope that this re-built one, which I now have pleasure in declaring open, may be a joy as well as a blessing, and give fresh hope to those destitute women for whom it is intended. With these few words may I have the pleasure of declaring this House duly open, and to wish it every success and a blessing to those who use it.

THE LORD MAYOR OF LONDON
(Alderman Sir George Broadbridge).

FOR BIRDS OF PASSAGE

I need hardly say what a pleasure it gives the Mayoress and myself to be here on this auspicious occasion, under such leadership as my Lord Mayor's. He is always first in doing any good he can; and nothing gives him greater pleasure, I know, than in opening a house of this class, belonging to an organisation which is so hardily worked at by these ladies, who have achieved the greatness of opening anew a house like this. Holborn is a busy, thriving borough, and naturally has to cater for vast numbers of workers and their homes. Holborn has done, and is doing, its utmost to provide more and more decent houses at reasonable rents. The past year's work shows what has been accomplished in the way of erecting flats and dwelling-houses. But there is always a floating population who cannot find permanent accommodation, and quite a number who do not require it, being merely birds of passage through the Borough. For them Cecil House is indeed a refuge. It was, and is, the only public lodging-house for women in the Borough, and one of the few places in Central London where a homeless woman can take her babies and young children. Upstairs in this House there are two small cots which, should occasion demand, can be increased by the removal of one bed to make room for two further cots, for

the official computation is that two babies equal one adult. You have heard from your chairman that from when this original House was opened in 1927 till it was closed in April 1936 for re-building, 120,000 beds were occupied, which shows what a great boon it must have been to those otherwise homeless women and girls. The new House, with its up-to-date arrangements and cheery atmosphere, will doubtless prove of as great a social value as its predecessor. We in Holborn are all very proud of Mrs. Chesterton and her work in providing such a place in this Borough, and I feel sure that everyone in the Borough very, very greatly appreciates it.

The Mayor of Holborn (Councillor R. H. Haxell).

THE GROWTH OF AN IDEAL

It is, as we know, ten years since this House was first opened. It was a wonderful old house, and it had an atmosphere of serenity which we all felt. But as you have learnt, it became decrepit, very wobbly on its feet, and it has had to be rebuilt. There are certain changes that I feel we all shall welcome. When we opened we had only one bathroom; later, we put in another, but they were not the beautiful, bright, shiny bathrooms that you will see when you go downstairs. Also we have now a very useful room which we call the Wardrobe Room, where we keep the shoes, stockings, jumpers, skirts and hats that our friends are kind enough to send us for our guests. All those gifts are very, very much appreciated. It is marvellous what it does to a woman in any class if she has a new hat, and we find that what happens to us happens to our lodgers. We also have a larger laundry, where the women can wash their own clothes and mangle them. We have been able to incorporate in this House all the modern improvements and modern requirements which the present day has grown to expect. Moreover, in this House we have installed radiators in the bedrooms, so that on very bitter nights the rooms may be warmer. You will see that our ideal has grown since we began our work, and the change synchronises with a change in our guests. The homeless women who come to us have grown neater and cleaner as a result of the installation of hot water in most of the other lodging-houses, which in this respect have followed the example of Cecil Houses, and in the place of pitiful little brown paper parcels that they used to bring, they have cases, cheap but neat.

I should like to read to you a telegram from Lady Lovat, who was with us when we opened this House ten years ago, but who, most unfortunately, has been prevented by ill-health from participating in our work for some time. She says: "I am distressed at being unable to be with you to-day. All connected with Cecil

Houses will rejoice in the resurrection of the original House. May this pioneer consolidate what it first set out to prove, which the other Houses have proved, the vital need for Cecil Houses in London.—Laura Lovat." To-night the doors will open once again, the lamp will shine down the street, and women who are homeless, destitute, tired, and cold, will come in to find the same welcome that they always found.

Mrs. Cecil Chesterton.

OCTOBER 8th and 9th

THE HEART OF A WARRIOR

I have been asked to-day to do a perfectly absurd thing. I have been asked to introduce Mrs. Cecil Chesterton, and the reason why I have been asked to do so is because, although there are hundreds of people who could do it a great deal better than I could, I do really think there is no one who could do it with more love and loyalty than I do at this moment.

Her work is known to you all, and she is one of those fortunate women in this year of grace who has lived to see her work prosper. She is surrounded by it; she has been surrounded by it for over ten years, and to-day, in this House, she celebrates once more the birth of a child. This House is, and will be to all connected with it, and to herself, the loveliest of all the Houses because it is on the site, and has the spirit of her first-born—the little house in Devonshire Street that came to birth in the year 1927.

A great many people have spoken about Cecil Houses on platforms on behalf of that cause. We have had dignitaries, novelists, civic authorities, and Lords Mayor—I am the only nonentity who has ever spoken on that subject in connection with the opening of Cecil Houses, and I think it is because I have been associated with this work from the beginning that I have been asked to do so.

It was in my house that Mrs. Chesterton wrote her book*; it was from my room that the book went forth with hopes and fears and ideals. Mrs. Chesterton never for one moment imagined that she would at this hour be enthroned in the hearts of so many women as she is, nor that so many women would owe lightness of heart, comfort of soul, to her, in the Houses which have been blessed by her work and by her name.

I am going to tell you things about her, and when I am once on my feet no one, thank God, can restrain me—I am going to tell you that she has given hostage during these years to misfortune; she has never, since her pilgrimage, been the same woman

* "In Darkest London," 1s. per copy from the offices of Cecil Houses.

physically. It rained incessantly during her wanderings—many of you may remember that year, 1925—I do. And on the last day of that pilgrimage she came to my door and my housekeeper said: "Mrs. Chesterton is outside, and she looks as though she would break in two."

There she was, a small, shivering figure with the heart of a warrior, and with that indomitable humour that never fails her. In that terrible ulster and battered hat very much the worse for wear, she clutched in one of those particularly charming hands of hers a bunch of anemones which had cost fourpence. She was exhausted, worn out, foot weary, and almost dead, but one thing survived, and that was her gallant soul.

I am going to tell you just one word of what women owe to Mrs. Chesterton, and what they have given her. The women owe to her beds, comfort of soul, and warmth. The women of England have given to Mrs. Chesterton the love and gratitude which has been shown to her by you all during these ten years—the love and gratitude which you are showing at this hour in being in this room.

There is no doubt that, without your understanding and sympathy, Keith Chesterton's work would never have endured for one hour, but she has the love, loyalty and, above all, the confidence you have given to her.

I am going to speak but one word more—I have spoken long enough at this machine, this microphone. To-day is her day, and this is her hour, and I want to thank everybody who has been connected with her, and everybody who in the future will be connected with her, and now I am very happy to introduce Mrs. Chesterton.

Mrs. Denston Fennelle.

"THE GOLD DUST OF ENGLAND"

I am very glad to see you all here to-day, and the other members of the Committee who are with us join with me in welcoming you.

As Mrs. Fennelle has said, it is owing to you that we are able to re-open this House. It is your loyalty and your support and your money which has made it possible. And now I feel I should like to tell you something more intimate about the way the work is run than is possible at a large meeting when we appeal to you for money.

To commence with, the Matron of this House has been with us from the first beginnings of our work, and was Matron here until the building, through old age, had to be pulled down. And now for the House at Kensal Road. Some of you may have been there, and so know that it has a very charming garden. Matron is very fond of her garden, and spends the little leisure she has in

growing the flowers which are her greatest pride, but her heart is given to her babies, about whom she says: "My babies? Why, my babies are the gold dust of England." I should like you all, when you go to Kensal Road, to hear from the Matron about her "gold dust". I always think it must be a very fortunate thing to be a baby at Kensal Road, and I think that babies there always chuckle and laugh more than ordinary babies.

Near by is Harrow Road House, a big place, which used to be a school; it can accommodate sixty-five women. Our Matron there is one of the most capable administrators I have ever met. She is not only clever in the administration of her House, but, like all the people who believe in Cecil Houses and want to help them, is always willing to give us the benefit of her ability. She is with us this afternoon, and will gladly show you round the House and tell you all she can.

We are quite near a coaching station at Wharfedale Road, and very handy for the girls arriving from the north. Once inside the House, as they say in their soft voices, they feel that they are "hame".

Waterloo Road is looked after by our youngest Matron, and that youngest Matron, if I may so describe her, is an elder sister, a kindly and sympathetic elder sister, often to women much older than herself, as to the young girls. They all go to her and tell her their troubles, because we all try to work together in Cecil Houses.

I have one of the most loyal Committees who give much of their leisure to telling people who do not know about Cecil Houses and the work that we do.

And then I have a very devoted office staff—all the organisation work is done from the office in Golden Square, with three permanent members, aided by enthusiastic voluntary helpers.

Now let us come back to this particular House. Various criticisms and comments have been made, which I should like to answer. One or two people wondered why the walls were distempered because, as they very correctly pointed out, distemper gets very soiled, and quoted my opinion that it is always best to use paint. The reason why the walls are distempered at the present moment is because of the properties of distemper. As we all know, if you paint the walls immediately a house is built, you get very sad results, the acid comes out of the plaster and spoils the effect. We are leaving the distemper as it is until the end of a year, when it is all going to be painted from top to bottom.

Then another very sympathetic lady said to one of our helpers that she felt tea and bread and butter was not enough for breakfast. Why couldn't our guests have eggs and bacon? When these Houses were started I budgeted on direct information of what homeless women could pay, and what could be supplied to them for their money, and I found that we could hope to be self-supporting

if, in addition to a bed, hot bath, and facilities for washing clothes, we supplied only tea and biscuits at night, and every morning, before any woman went out to work, no matter what the hour, a cup of hot tea and bread and butter. If we give egg and bacon we cannot be self-supporting. My Committee decided with me that, if a thing is a real social need, it ought to be self-supporting. We do not come to you again and again for the same House for which you have subscribed. We cannot—we are very sorry it is not possible—give egg and bacon, and so the women have to have tea and bread and butter.

Some people criticise the hardness of the bolsters, and think that the women should have feather pillows. I wish they could, but in a House which entertains a number of women there are various conditions of health which we have to observe. Feathers and wool hold vermin, consequently we have the very best horse-hair beds and bolsters, less comfortable but more sanitary. Then, again, somebody wanted to know why we had a monkey cage in one of the rooms. First of all I was rather puzzled, until I realised that the particular supporter was referring to the place where we hang clothes to dry. There are hot pipes enclosed in wire netting, because, human nature being what it is, sometimes a lady who has very few underclothes may not unnaturally feel she would like some that do not belong to her. The garments are hung on the hot pipes inside the wire netting, which is locked, and in the morning it is unlocked and the women given their dry things.

I value very much these questions; indeed, I value any suggestions and criticisms that you may feel that you would like to give me, or any member of the Committee. We are always pleased to learn from our supporters, but I am very anxious to explain that the arrangements of this and of all our Houses are the results of ten years' experiences, and the budgeting of supplies are the result of my own knowledge as a homeless woman, when I realised what I needed and what I could not get.

It is woman who should surely help woman. These homeless ones are the same as we are, only not so fortunate. But I have learnt that if we give our help and thoughts and sympathy to these our sisters who are not so fortunate, we shall value the happiness with which we are so blessed more intimately and thankfully.

Mrs. Cecil Chesterton.

LEAFLETS, SUBSCRIPTION FORMS, AND COLLECTING BOXES WILL BE GLADLY SUPPLIED, FREE OF CHARGE, ON APPLICATION TO THE HON. ORGANISING SECRETARY, CECIL HOUSES (INC.), 11 GOLDEN SQUARE, W.1. TELEPHONE No. : GERRARD 3391.

BUY A PIE!

By

D. B. WYNDHAM LEWIS

The scene is the glittering gold-and-crystal foyer of the "Magnifique." At "Reception" the glossiest of managers is smoothing his hair and yawning as he eyes the small, timid, silver-haired figure before him, clutching its sables nervously round it.

"Name?"

"The Duchess of Rye."

"Wanting?"

"Just a room for to-night."

"Married?" asks "Reception" languidly, taking a pen. "Got your lines? I see. Age? Husband alive? Maintaining you? Husband's occupation? Children? Legitimate? How many? Maiden name? Religion? Any police convictions? Who recommended you?"

To these and other questions the tiny shrinking Duchess returns satisfactory answer, whereupon "Reception" turns to the clerk at his side.

"Got a room for her?"

"Half a mo. . . . Hey, Ma, wheredya get the diamonds?"

"They were given me by my husband, sir," quavers the nervous Duchess. "I'm a respectable married woman, sir, indeed I am. Bought them at Cartier's, he did, thirty years ago come Michaelmas."

"Check up," says "Reception", lounging away. "And see she gets a bath."

* * * * *

No doubt such scenes frequently occur everywhere in great democracies (like ours) where laws are severe, kindly, and equal, and neither rich nor poor, as Anatole France remarked, are permitted to beg in the street. Mrs. Chesterton tells me she cannot ever remember seeing such an incident happening at the Ritz, but she certainly has seen it happen at Institutions at the other end of the social scale; and it seemed to her so unnecessary, so almost humiliating, that when she founded the first Cecil House in Devonshire Street she made "No Questions" practically its first regulation. It apparently took some time for certain bureaucrats to swallow this affront, but they are now resigned to it. No woman putting

down her shilling for a bed in a Cecil House (or in some cases not putting it down), is asked a single question.

It occurred to me at a jolly evening in the Waterloo Road the other night that this gentlewomanly agreement makes a difference to people's eyes. You can be practically penniless and practically hopeless, but if they treat you like a real person, with as much right to your self-respect and independence as they have, it gives you a certain poise.

To keep this poise with the remains of two lovely black eyes isn't everybody's gift, but the old lady who danced with the Matron certainly had it. The fire was big and bright—no inhuman nonsense about hot-water pipes in this big bright room, with cheery walls painted in the standard Cecil House orange—and the lady at the piano had once played in a cinema, and we all sang "The Lily of Laguna" and many other favourites and drank our tea and watched the graceful arabesques of the old lady with the black eyes. They were respectable black eyes, due to skidding off a banana skin against a dustbin. The old lady herself explained the circumstances voluntarily; for—as in Mayfair in similar circumstances—nobody dreamed of comment. Her voice wasn't as good, not her zest in chorus work as satisfying, as the old lady who had known Louie Freear and was going into hospital. The Louie Freear old lady knew the words and music of everything and sang like a lark. "Isn't it lovely?" she said to me with sparkling eyes. "Here am I going in to-morrow, and I've got all this to look back upon!" And she meant it. She'd enjoyed it. We'd all enjoyed it, even the girl who was terribly worried about her passport, even the girl with the cultivated accent, even the one who had to get up every morning before five and walk to the Strand in leaky shoes, to work ten hours a day to keep the authorities from taking her baby away from her. Contentment and momentary surcease from fear and grinding miseries was in every face. Even the girl brooding apart in one corner—and God knows she had plenty to brood over, as the most casual eye could perceive—brightened up and lit another gasper and asked the pianist for "The Temple Bells"—the best of all the "Indian Love Lyrics", as everybody knows.

Since no questions are asked in Cecil Houses, confidences are naturally the rule. The Matron's ear receives them first, and they go no farther, except that in due course numbers of other recipients are equally familiar with them at first-hand. It is difficult not to go Dickensian over the indomitable courage and cheerfulness of the very poor, their sympathy for one another, their gift of extracting pleasure out of the minutest circumstances. In Cecil Houses you find all these. One shilling at the office means more to a woman than escape from the bitter street, a hot bath (towel and soap thrown in), lashings of hot water and hot drying-pipes for private laundry-work, foot-baths and periodical free treatment by a chiropodist (you have to tramp London on your flat feet all day to

know what that means), tea and biscuits at night, a good warm bed in a cheerful dormitory, with lockers, and tea and bread-and-butter in the morning; it means human companionship and talk, friendly faces, books, music and games, the restoration of the tired spirit, the thawing of numbed minds, the flight of loneliness. It also means the chance of a job. Cecil Houses are now able to provide employment in many cases. No wonder the Matrons get the letters they do.

Dickens, who created Mrs. Higden—the old lady who knew Louie Freear was Mrs. Higden to the life—should be writing this, not I. That horror of the charity (as it is called) of the State flourishes among the Mrs. Higidens of to-day as strongly as in his time. They treat you like dirt, they seem to think you have no soul, and there is a strong rumour going round that when you're too old and tiresome and they're sick of you they put a pillow over your head and finish you. I don't know how many Mrs. Higidens really believe this last piece of information, but it is prevalent, and it shows what State charity connotes in the minds of those of the State's children chiefly interested. Those who care what happens to the poor hear stranger folklore than this. One would almost think that compulsory education had failed.

I came away from Waterloo Road uneasy and exhilarated. The Cecil Houses appeared to me like five warm, bright little oases in the terrifying desert of London's streets; five rest-houses in the jungle. I know, of course, that all over London there are hundreds of men and women devoting selfless lives to the miserable and orphaned and oppressed, and I know that Mrs. Chesterton's work does not clash in any way with any of theirs, but complements it, for she created the Cecil Houses to meet a special problem, after her own deliberately-undertaken jungle experiences. After an evening at a Cecil House you realise that every night in London in this year, 1938, there are women of every age and type without a place to sleep in (or even to cry in, like Ma Parker in Katherine Mansfield's story). Even when those refuges and hostels which take women, and often ask questions, and are probably justified in many cases in so doing, are full, there are still women with nowhere to sleep. When, therefore, Mrs. Chesterton's five present self-supporting houses have grown to fifty, those periodical police declarations that there is practically no night wandering in London may be within reasonable distance of accuracy. Having seen what unfeigned cheer and tact and sympathy and friendliness and help are implicit in the Cecil House atmosphere, one cannot but feel that the multiplication of Cecil Houses all over London is of vital and immediate importance. For those of us who are lucky enough not to be women, and lonely, and helpless, and unwanted, and weary, and vanquished by circumstance, there is only one way to satisfy our evident obligations in this matter, and that is the manner indicated by the pie-man to the old lady in that very old and perpetually admirable anecdote: "Damn your sympathy. Buy a pie."

NOTICES FROM THE PRESS

"Most people know about the good work that is done at the Cecil Houses, of which there are now five, though the original house at 35, Devonshire Street, which was closed last year for rebuilding, is not quite ready for reopening.

"No one can read the account of some of the women's lives without feeling a pang of sorrow, almost a sense of shame, that some existences should be so desperately hard and unhappy. Some end with a brighter note—help and encouragement given, and posts found for the workless. Others are tragic in the extreme. 'She died in hospital last Wednesday. . . . She was too proud to plead, and starved to death.' 'She came in wet through. She had no money and nowhere to go.' 'The police brought a mother and daughter of twelve who were stranded in London.' One wonders what horrors such women must have endured before these Cecil Houses were opened. Queen Mary has shown her interest by a monetary donation and gifts of all kinds—toys, sweets, and cakes at Christmas, and a large arm-chair for Devonshire Street; two cots for the Wharfedale Road House; and an overmantel, a clock and a framed portrait of herself divided among the three other centres. Each house has individuality, for at one the old women seem most at home, another attracts north country girls who have come to seek work in the south; the more reserved choose a third; and the centre in Waterloo Road attracts all ages, and is a cheerful spot. In many instances the matrons are able to send these women on to suitable posts. I can think of no cause more deserving of help."—*Birmingham Post*, April 28th, 1937.

"London's increasing horde of down-and-out women seeking a night's shelter is causing concern to the authorities.

"The Coronation festivities are thought to be the magnet for the swelling of the number of wanderers, and charitable organisations are disturbed at the limited accommodation for women.

"In the annual report of Cecil Houses, a women's public lodging-house fund under the chairmanship of Lady Lovat, emphasis is laid on the fact that only 12½ per cent of the capital's lodging-house facilities are available for women.

"A fifth house is to be opened shortly by this organisation, and since they opened employment has been found for 896 women and girls as general servants, waitresses, and daily helps.

"The four houses of the fund," says the report, "continue to attract individual types.

"At one it is the old women who seem most at home, while the vigorous, independent north country girl invariably gravitates to another. The more reserved almost unconsciously choose a third, and some very poignant stories are included in the houses' annals.

"Our lodgers include casual workers, paper and flower sellers, itinerant charwomen, unemployed domestics and waitresses, and women of better education who have fallen on evil times. Others come up from the provinces either to join their husbands who have found or are looking for work, and perhaps to obtain a job themselves.

"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.

"Increasing use is being made of the houses for stranded strangers, and on several occasions help has been asked on behalf of girls and women from

other countries who have found themselves friendless in London and without money.'

"It is planned that there shall be a special Coronation celebration at each of the women's-lodging houses, and gifts of money and clothing are needed to help in the work."—*The Manchester Evening News*, April 27th, 1937.

"... The difference between these hostels and the ordinary institution is that Cecil Houses are non-sectarian, and no questions are asked of any applicant who books her bed. The fact of her need is enough. The gradual change in social and economic conditions has brought Cecil Houses into touch with a number of women outside the usual scope of charitable activities. The police make increasing use of the hostels for stranded strangers, and on more than one occasion help has been asked on behalf of girls and women from other countries who find themselves friendless in London and without English currency."—*Scotsman*, May 2nd, 1937.

"Founded ten years ago by Mrs. Cecil Chesterton, the public lodging-houses for women known as Cecil Houses, fill what was a very serious gap in the provision for London's homeless. With the reopening this year of the house in Devonshire Street, Theobald's Road, there will be five houses in the London area, each providing clean beds, hot baths, and facilities for washing clothes for from fifty to sixty women at a cost of a shilling a night for each woman. There is also accommodation for babies at the houses, which are non-sectarian; any homeless woman is admitted, and no questions are asked. Once the initial capital expenditure of some £7,000 is found, a house becomes entirely self-supporting, although subscriptions are much needed for replenishments and the extension of activities. In addition to their primary object of providing lodging, the staff are able to find employment for a number of those who are in need of it, and do much to help the women to regain their self-respect by the distribution of gifts of clothing and boots and shoes."—*Lancet*, May 22nd, 1937.

"Mrs. Denston Fennelle, of the Executive Committee of Cecil Houses, told the Catholic Nurses' Guild assembled at the Virgo Fidelis Convent, Old Brompton Road, last week, about the great work of Mrs. Cecil Chesterton (sister-in-law of the late G. K. Chesterton) in founding these five well-known temporary homes for homeless women in London.

"She spoke wittily and convincingly of Mrs. Chesterton's self-imposed task of discovering at first hand the conditions of the poor by taking up such casual 'jobs' as match-selling and charing (including 'doorsteps'), sleeping the while in the most dreadful 'doss-houses'.

"Mrs. Chesterton awoke the public conscience. A great Mansion House meeting, with Fr. Vincent McNabb, O.P., the Chief Rabbi, Mr. G. B. Shaw, and a galaxy of similar notabilities as speakers, resulted in a collection of over £2,000, which provided funds for the start of the first Cecil House."—*Universe*, April 16th, 1937.

"Here is some news about women who are not able to eat as much as they like. Coronation year will see the re-opening of the first and now the fifth Cecil House for homeless women, to which go provincials who hope to find work in London, and arrive almost penniless. Quite recently a woman arrived at one of the houses with a baby in a perambulator. She and her husband had walked with the child all the way from Newcastle, hoping for a livelihood in London. They had slept under hedges, and occasionally in a barn and under haystacks.

"They are typical of many who come to London, and a new Cecil House is an important London amenity. I am told that there is an improvement in the standard of the women who go to such lodgings. Within ten years they

have learnt to use cheap, neat suit-cases instead of brown paper parcels. Their general appearance is better. A larger number ask for baths and facilities for washing and darning their clothes. But they are suffering terribly at the moment from the fall in wages."—*Nottingham Journal*, May 3rd, 1937.

"Much admirable work successfully performed is disclosed in the report of Cecil Houses, a society which provides and maintains public lodging-houses for homeless women in London. For 1s. a night a homeless woman may go to any one of the five Cecil Houses and get a good bed, a hot bath, tea and biscuits, and facilities for washing her clothes.

"Since the work of the society began nine years ago, 626,640 beds and 38,315 cots have been occupied, and work has also been found for 896 women and girls. The society obtains capital funds by public appeals, and uses the money to secure suitable houses for its work. Each house becomes self-supporting.

"Those who wish to make annual subscriptions or donations should make them payable to Mr. D. G. Somerville, M.P., the Hon. Treasurer, at the offices of Cecil Houses, Women's Public Lodging-House Fund, 11, Golden Square, W.1."—*Westminster Chronicle*, May 7th, 1937.

"Some years ago Mrs. Cecil Chesterton was sent into London's 'under-world' by a Sunday newspaper. It was her job to find out how women who were 'down and out' lived. She stayed in cheap lodging-houses and hostels, slept 'underneath the arches', and sold matches in the streets. The facts she discovered so appalled her that she wrote 'In Darkest London', describing the terrible experiences she had had.

"Having written the book, her next move was to arouse the public to take some practical steps to provide better hostels for working women whose resources were meagre, and whom life was not treating too kindly.

"Thus there came into being 'The Cecil Houses', where women could be assured of a good night's lodging for a modest shilling. She appealed to her friends to help with the work. The Bishop of London made her book the subject of his St. Paul's Cathedral sermon. Robert Blatchford and other distinguished journalists wrote about 'In Darkest London' in the Sunday Press. Widespread attention was aroused.

"The first hostel opened, ten years ago, in Devonshire Street, Theobald's Road, has lately been redecorated and extended. In other parts of London there are four other hostels of this kind. They are a tremendous improvement on anything that existed before the Cecil House movement began. To-day, the hostels are self-supporting, and Mrs. Chesterton is rightly very proud of the work accomplished. At the Club quite lately she was telling us about her work. You can learn about it, too, should you meet her in the Club some time, or if you write to the Secretary, Cecil House, Golden Square, you can secure information."—*The Trade Unionist*, July, 1937.

"To a mother in hospital, distracted with worry and sobbing for her six-weeks-old baby, who disappeared three days ago, Scotland Yard officers carried the news that soon her child would be in her arms.

"White woollens and a blue coat, identical with those the baby was wearing, had established beyond doubt the identity of a child taken to Oldham Police Station, 200 miles away.

"Scotland Yard had ordered an all-England search following the tragic mother's story of how a girl had disappeared with the child from the New Cut, Lambeth, after asking if she could wheel the perambulator. The mother was in a shop at the time.

"Some hours later the perambulator was found abandoned at Vivian Way, Finchley, but by then the mother herself, Mrs. Minnie Florence Pearce, of Cecil House, Waterloo Road, Kennington, S.E., had disappeared.

"Detectives found her eventually in Lambeth Hospital in a distressed and highly nervous state.

"Torn with worry, she had been tramping the streets of London ceaselessly in an unavailing search for her boy.

"There was pathos in the fact that she had been taken to the very hospital where little Ivor was born.

"Now the police are trying to solve the mystery of the baby's journey across half England to arrive safe and well in an Oldham lodging-house.

"They have announced that they are anxious to interview a seventeen-year-old girl with dark bobbed hair named 'Ena', who they believe can solve this riddle.

"Ena was the girl Mrs. Pearce told the police she left her baby with when she was shopping in the New Cut.

"And it was a girl answering Ena's description who arrived at a common lodging-house at Grimshaw Street, Oldham, with little Ivor Pearce in her arms.

"The girl had apparently made her way from London to Newcastle-under-Lyme, Staffordshire, by motor-lorry. There, it is thought, she obtained a lift in a private car to Manchester.

"Mr. Arthur Hall, who is staying at the Oldham lodging-house, told how a message from his wife to the police brought the search for Ivor to an end.

"The girl asked for lodgings, and she and the child slept in the room next to my wife and me,' he declared. 'She told us that the baby belonged to her sister. Later, she denied this, and said it was her own child.

"She said she had been living with an Irishman, and that the boy had been born in Lambeth Hospital, London, in July.

"She said she was fed up with looking after him, and asked us to adopt him. We told her we were finding it difficult enough to keep ourselves alive.

"Then she said she had a chance of a job in Liverpool, and asked us to mind the baby while she went there after the post. When she did not return we informed the police.'

"Detective-Sergeant Hucker informed Mrs. Pearce that her baby was safe and sound.

"Later, a doctor who visited her said: 'The effect of the news was marvellous. Never have I seen a woman more relieved.'"—*News of the World*, August 22nd, 1937.

"A sequel to the finding in Oldham, Lancashire, of Ivor Pearce, the six-weeks-old baby who vanished in London, was heard at Tower Bridge Police Court to-day.

"Eva Clark, aged 18, of no fixed address—a short well-built girl wearing a simple black costume—was charged with unlawfully taking away Ivor Pearce from the custody of his mother, Mrs. Minnie Pearce, of Cecil House, Waterloo Road, Lambeth, at New Cut, Lambeth, on August 17th.

"Clark was remanded in custody for eight days. The Magistrate asked for a medical report on her.

"Detective-Sergeant Hucker asked the magistrate to accept only evidence of arrest to-day.

"He said:

"At 1 p.m. yesterday I received a baby from officers of the Oldham Police. At 3.45 p.m. the same day I saw Clark detained at Liverpool City Police Station and said: 'I am a police officer from London and I am going to arrest you for unlawfully taking away a child, Ivor Pearce, son of Minnie Pearce, at 6.30 p.m. on August 17th, at New Cut, Lambeth, and I shall take you to London, where you will be charged.

"I cautioned her, and she made no reply. I later showed her the baby and said: 'This is the baby I have recovered from Oldham,' and she said: 'Yes, I know.'

"In the train on the way to London she said: 'I took the baby because I liked the kid.'" Continuing, the officer said: 'I took her to Kennington Road police station where she was charged, and on the charge being read over, she said "Sure."'

"The clerk said to the girl: 'Have you any questions to ask this officer?'

"Clark: 'No.'

"Detective-Sergeant Hucker said that one reason he asked for a remand for eight days was that Mrs. Pearce, the baby's mother, who was in hospital was not well enough to give evidence."—*Evening News, August 24th, 1937.*

"Last February, when the Sutton Coldfield Women Citizen's Association held its annual meeting, the newly elected president, Mrs. Cecil Chesterton, was prevented by illness from being present. She has now arranged to attend a meeting of the Association on October 6th, at which she will speak on 'Women's Place in the World'.

"Mrs. Chesterton is well known for her efforts to learn at first hand some of the conditions of life for vagrant women. During the weeks when she lived in the London slums, voluntarily destitute, she earned her only means by selling matches, scrubbing steps and washing-up in a Soho restaurant; and it was then that she learnt that, although there were public lodging-houses for men, there was no such accommodation for women.

"The terrible revelations which she afterwards published resulted in the first of the Cecil Houses being opened. For a shilling a night they provide a woman with a good bed, a hot bath, tea and biscuits, as well as facilities for washing and drying her clothes.

"Queen Mary has from the start shown her interest in the movement, and has sent a number of personal gifts to the different houses."—*Birmingham Mail, September 16th, 1937.*

". . . Mrs. Chesterton is in many ways an interesting and forceful personality. Not content with mere hearsay about the lives of vagrant women, she went to live amongst them, to learn for herself about their conditions.

"For weeks she lived destitute in the London slums, earning her keep by selling matches, scrubbing steps, or washing up in a cheap Soho restaurant. She found out that although men could find shelter in a public lodging-house, women were usually left with the prospect of a night on the Embankment.

"As a result of her striking revelations the Cecil Houses were opened. These provide food, bed and bath for women, at a shilling a night."—*Birmingham News, September 18th, 1937.*

"Ten years ago the first Cecil House for Homeless Women was established at 35, Devonshire Street, Holborn, W.C.1. A lovely Queen Anne dwelling, it succumbed to the wear and tear of time. Now in its place stands a pleasant red-bricked building with blue tiles, bright curtains and gay paint, and on Thursday, October 7th, at 3 p.m., the Lord Mayor of London, the Lady Mayoress, the Sheriffs and their ladies, will be officially welcomed to the borough for the reopening ceremony. Matchsellers, newspaper vendors, charwomen, waitresses, all sorts and conditions of hard-working but homeless women, will once more find a comfortable lodging at a price they can pay—a shilling a night for a good bed, hot bath, hot tea and bread and butter night and morning. No questions are asked, but those needing help and counsel will have every possible assistance, and the smiling face of the Matron, who for ten years was mother to the homeless, will once again greet them. Invitations to see this model lodging-house are obtainable from the Honorary Organising Secretary, Cecil Houses (Inc.), 11, Golden Square, W.1."—*Tatler, September 22nd, 1937.*

"It is ten years ago since the first Cecil House for accommodating homeless women at the lowest possible rate was opened in Devonshire Street, Holborn, as a sequel to a newspaper commission undertaken by Mrs. Cecil Chesterton to ascertain conditions at first hand for herself, going out penniless and living on her wits for a fortnight. She discovered that of the London public lodging-houses, only 9 per cent were available for women, and immediately started a crusade to make provision for these casuals and derelicts. The first meeting with that object was held in Sir Philip Sassoon's

London drawing-room, and at it thousands of pounds were subscribed. That old Queen Anne dwelling in Devonshire Street has had to be scrapped, and the new Cecil House, which will accommodate fifty women and two babies will be reopened on Thursday, October 7th, at 3 p.m. by the Lord Mayor of London, accompanied by the Lady Mayoress, the Sheriffs and their ladies. Mrs. Chesterton has that faculty of all great organisers of enlisting the sympathies of eminent and distinguished people for her Cecil Houses enterprise. Her supporters have included Cabinet Ministers, great soldiers, famous actors and actresses, men and women renowned in literature and the arts."—*Cork Examiner, October 1st, 1937.*

"Ten years ago the Lord Mayor of London, at the time Sir Rowland Blades, opened the first Cecil House ever established for the homeless women of London. It was a rather dilapidated Queen Anne house in Devonshire Street, Bloomsbury, which had been repaired and adapted under the direction of Mr. Ralph Knott, the architect of the new County Hall, who afterwards directed the transformation of other houses into Cecil Houses. Since his death that work has been continued by his partner, Mr. E. Stone Collins, who designed the new building that now stands on the sites of the old Queen Anne house and the house next door.

"When the destruction of those houses was decreed by the L.C.C., Mrs. Chesterton hoped that it would be possible to save something, the staircase or a mantelpiece or two, to incorporate in the new building, but the only mementoes to be preserved are the arm-chair and umbrella-stand which Queen Mary gave Cecil House after she had visited it the day before the official opening. The old house accommodated forty-four women, the new one, allowing for the extra space now required by the L.C.C., will take fifty women and two babies, and it is in many ways much more convenient. A shilling a night will provide any homeless woman or girl with a good bed, hot bath, and tea with bread and butter, both night and morning.

"The Lord Mayor of London, with the Lady Mayoress and Sheriffs, in state, will reopen this Cecil House on October 7th."—*Manchester Guardian, October 1st, 1937.*

"Orange, royal blue, and green, are the colours chosen by Mrs. Cecil Chesterton for the decoration of the new Cecil House in Devonshire Street, Holborn, which the Lord Mayor, accompanied by the Lady Mayoress and the Sheriffs and their ladies, will reopen next Thursday afternoon. The house, with accommodation for fifty women and two babies, replaces the old Queen Anne dwelling which opened its doors ten years ago as the first of the five Cecil Houses. I have written about them often before, but indeed it would be hard ever to say enough about them. Their modest claim is that for one shilling a night they provide any homeless woman or girl with a 'good bed, a hot bath, and hot tea and bread and butter at night and in the morning'. Their actual benefits far exceed this. Opportunities are given for the washing and mangling of clothes, after which they are dried and aired and handed back to their owners ready to put on in the morning. There is a 'wardrobe room' where many a woman seeking work has gone to be fitted out with suitable clothes from hat to stockings. And no woman has ever been turned away for want of the prescribed shilling. If she has only sixpence, 'The House' makes up the rest. If she has nothing at all, 'The House' provides the shilling."—*Birmingham Post, October 2nd, 1937.*

"Ten years ago the first Cecil House for Homeless Women was established at 35, Devonshire Street, Holborn. A fine Queen Anne dwelling, it succumbed to the wear and tear of time.

"Now, in its place, stands a pleasant red-brick building, and on Thursday next at 3 o'clock, the Lord Mayor of London, accompanied by the Lady Mayoress and the Sheriffs and their ladies, will be officially welcomed to the borough for the reopening ceremony."—*Observer, October 2nd, 1937.*

"Few London ventures of the philanthropic kind arouse such cordiality as the launching of a new Cecil House. That which the Lord and Lady Mayoress, the Sheriffs and their ladies, will launch in Devonshire Street next Thursday is not really a new Cecil House but an old one reconditioned. It was the first founded by Mrs. Cecil Chesterton, sister-in-law of Mr. G. K. Chesterton. The Houses, of which there are several now, provide lodgings, hot baths, tea, bread and butter night and morning, and no questions asked, for homeless women at the modest price of a shilling. Queen Mary takes great interest in them, and gives useful presents to each as it is opened, and clergymen of all denominations support appeals for an enterprise greatly needed."—*Liverpool Daily Post, October 2nd, 1937.*

"The glitter of the City's State outfit will brighten drab Devonshire Street behind Southampton Row, when the Lord Mayor and Sheriffs come along after lunch to-day to open the latest Cecil House for women.

"Looking at it I felt myself back in the eighteenth century. With fine skill Mrs. Chesterton's architects have produced a perfect Queen Anne front from two old houses.

"Bright bricks and blue curtains have splashed some needed colour in a dim street."—*Daily Sketch, October 7th, 1937.*

"One of the happiest women in Town this afternoon will be Mrs. Cecil Chesterton. She is welcoming the Lord Mayor and Lady Mayoress of London to Devonshire Street for the reopening of the first Cecil House, which has been rebuilt, and with the most modern sanitation and equipment. It fully deserves the title of 'Shilling-a-Night-Hotel' and will offer a comfortable lodging for fifty working women.

"It was just ten years ago that Mrs. Cecil Chesterton realised her noble ideal of making provision for such women. Devonshire Street, in Bloomsbury, which owes its name to an Earl of Devonshire, not the county, was a street which wore the drab appearance of having seen better days. Major Benton Walker saved one fine old house there which is now a fascinating musical museum. Mrs. Chesterton secured another house which became the first Cecil Shilling-a-Night-Hotel. It proved just what lonely women were wanting. Four other houses have followed.

"A Lord Mayor of London opened the first, and the Lord Mayor is now reopening it. Three of the Cecil Houses have been formally opened by Lord Mayors; one by a Home Secretary; and one by Mr. Ramsay MacDonald, when he was Prime Minister."—*Ipswich Evening Star, October 7th, 1937.*

"Over half a million unemployed and homeless women have passed through Cecil Houses since the first of the chain of hostels established in London by Mrs. Cecil Chesterton opened its doors, ten years ago. That first house, in Devonshire Street, rebuilt and enlarged, has been closed for twelve months, but yesterday the Lord Mayor performed the reopening ceremony.

"These houses, which offer their lodgers bed, supper, bath and breakfast for a shilling a night, have had interesting and eventful history.

"Queen Mary has, from the first, shown her practical sympathy. I was shown yesterday the arm-chair and umbrella-stand that Her Majesty sent to Devonshire Street.

"Two of the houses were opened by a Prime Minister and a Home Secretary; Mr. Bernard Shaw, on one occasion, spoke on their behalf.

"They are cheerful, friendly places. They do not rank as 'charities' in the ordinary sense of the word, for nobody who seeks their shelter is questioned. The want of it is considered enough, and they have been the means, incidentally, of assisting thousands of workless women to find employment."—*Yorkshire Telegraph and Manchester Evening Chronicle, October 8th, 1937.*

"For an hour this afternoon Devonshire Street in Holborn, seemed once more to be part of fashionable London. Important-looking men and richly dressed women were leaving splendid carriages at the hospitably open doors



"A NIGHTLY FLOCK OF YOUNG AND OLD"

of one of the houses. Among them were the Lord Mayor, the Mayor and Mayoress of Holborn, and the Sheriffs and their ladies. They had assembled for the opening of the new Cecil House, about which I wrote recently. Behind its gaily painted exterior are cheerful rooms, with wide windows giving a sense of space and freedom. Curtains of royal blue are in pleasant contrast with walls and woodwork of cream and orange. Floors are covered with linoleum patterned to imitate red tiles. Walls are decorated with a few good coloured posters. In the sitting-room, which will easily seat the fifty women for whose use the house is designed, there is a large open fireplace with a high-backed oak settle on either side. Long refectory tables, also of oak, are covered with fresh-looking blue and white check cloths, and dotted about the room are high-backed Windsor arm-chairs.

"The matron of this lodging house is proud of having worked in it from its beginning, and of understanding the women so well that she knows just what little special arrangements will make for their greater comfort. But she is prouder still to point to arrangements thought out by Mrs. Cecil Chesterton, whom she finds 'a very wonderful woman'. One of these is to have the kitchen opening straight off the sitting-room, so that freshly made tea is piping hot when, with freshly cut bread and butter, it is served to the women. Another is to have mirrors in the washing-rooms, placed at varying heights, and in a proper light. A third is to have placed beside every bed a steel locker with a fixed central shelf forming two compartments, and doors fitted with rubber stops to prevent noise when closing. Bedrooms contain from three to nine bedsteads, each the best of its kind and furnished with good pillows, warm, soft blankets, and beautifully-laundered linen. A room with only three beds has also two cots, for often it happens that a woman needs a night's shelter for her baby as well as for herself. Of the fifty women who will arrive at the house to-night, none will be expected to wait upon herself, or even to make her own bed. She will be able to spend her whole time resting, and prepare for another day's work, or for the search for work."—*Birmingham Post, October 8th, 1937.*

"A drab part of Bloomsbury—Devonshire Street—was enlivened by civic pageantry to-day when the Lord Mayor of London, assisted by the Mayor of Holborn, opened the fifth Cecil House. Cecil Houses, founded by Mrs. Cecil Chesterton in 1927, provide beds for women at one shilling a night.

"The Devonshire Street Cecil House was actually the first. But it has been reconstructed, and is now known as the fifth. It was founded in an old Queen Anne house in 1927, and by the time it was closed last year 121,292 women had used it.

"The new house accommodates fifty women and a number of children. I inspected it this afternoon. The beds are in small dormitories, but there is no lack of space. There are pleasant recreation rooms, and in the basement excellent bathrooms and facilities for washing clothes. Use of all the amenities is included in the shilling charged for admittance.

"Cecil Houses provide a much-wanted need. Of the public lodging accommodation available for the homeless in London, 87½ per cent is for men, only 12½ per cent for women. In the five Cecil Houses 250 women can find a bed each night. At the end of March this year 626,648 beds and 38,315 cots had been occupied. After the initial cost, the houses are self-supporting."—*Yorkshire Post, October 8th, 1937.*

"Turning from busy Theobalds Road into Devonshire Street, no need to pause to reflect upon the precise whereabouts of Cecil House, where women without work and home may lodge for a shilling a night. You see its lamp and its brightly painted, brightly curtained windows at once. It was here that ten years ago the first of London's five Cecil Houses was opened. And when the old house had to be rebuilt, the next-door premises were acquired, and everything put in bright and shining order. All was ready for visitors to the reopening ceremony on Thursday, at which the Lord Mayor of London and the Mayor of Holborn officiated. We heard from Mrs. Cecil Chesterton of additions and changes in the equipment of the new house. 'Many things

have changed,' she said, 'since we began our work. I think we have been able to make it all more comfortable. The bathrooms are bigger and white-tiled. We have radiators in the bedrooms, so that in cold weather there is always warmth right through the house. And we have a special "wardrobe room" where we keep the clothes so kindly sent by friends for our lodgers.' Mrs. Chesterton smiled. 'All of us,' she said, 'feel different and better when we have a new hat to wear—how much more so, then, these women who come here.' But it would be impossible to imagine a friendlier or more welcoming atmosphere than that which characterises this house in Devonshire Street. The sitting-room, with its orange-coloured paint and light walls adorned by gay posters, the work of artists who design for London travellers, has a cosy fireplace and big windows. The floor must feel good to tired feet, for it is covered with rubber in a tiled design.

"Even the stairs are as comfortable to walk upon, and they lead to pleasant dormitories, each bed with a blue-and-white cover. 'More space between the beds now!' said Mrs. Chesterton, with pride. And to each bed a locker. Formerly these lockers were made of wood, but steel has been substituted as being more hygienic. The house accommodates fifty women, and there are two cots. Big, bright bathrooms and a room for the washing, mangling and drying of clothes are 'luxuries' about which there are rarely two minds among the women who come to Cecil Houses. 'I think that if we have changed,' said Mrs. Chesterton, 'so have the women. They are tidier and cleaner. Those pathetic paper parcels in which they used to carry their belongings are seldom seen now, instead they come with small cheap cases—very cheap ones, but tidy. . . . ' Perhaps it is not one of the least triumphs for Mrs. Cecil Chesterton and those who have helped to establish these centres that other hostels for women have followed their lead in recent years, and paid more attention to such needs as plenty of hot water and facilities for washing and drying clothes."—*Scotsman, October 11th, 1937.*

"The biggest personal address book in London lies on a work-table in an office in Golden Square, Soho.

"It contains over 10,000 names of people from bankers to button moulders; countesses to kitchenmaids, all regular correspondents of the owner.

"She is Mrs. Cecil Chesterton, founder of the Cecil Houses for homeless women, and her 'letter friends' are those who help to make the Houses possible.

"Among them is one in Betchworth, Surrey, who has not slept for years.

"All through the night she knits for the 'Cecil' babies, forgetting the terrors of sleeplessness in creating exquisite garments for children she will never see.

"Another friend is a cobbler of Aberystwyth, who sends Mrs. Chesterton shoes that have been left on his hands.

"Most faithful correspondent of all is a London office-cleaner, who encloses six penny stamps in her fortnightly letter.

"In the small three-room office in Golden Square, with only a staff of three to help her, Mrs. Chesterton manages the entire chain of five Cecil Houses, which, since the first was opened ten years ago, have provided 626,648 beds for women and 38,315 cots for babies.

"Her budgeting she learned from personal experience, when in 1925 she scrubbed steps and slept in doss-houses and on the Embankment to discover how homeless women lived.

"Cecil lodgers pay a shilling a night for a friendly home, full of light and colour, with a big fire, hot bath, tea, breakfast, and the chance to wash and dry their clothes.

"The shilling a night brings in over £3,500 a year, which makes the houses self-supporting.

"High rents in London still make the problem of homeless women an urgent one, Mrs. Chesterton told me.

"Their numbers are being increased by self-respecting workers paying up to 12s. a week for tiny back rooms. When they lost their jobs they were thrust on the street because there were no cheaper rooms to be had."—*Louise Morgan in News Chronicle, October 15th, 1937.*

"Ten years ago the first Cecil House for homeless women was established at 35, Devonshire Street, Holborn, W.C.1. A lovely Queen Anne dwelling, it succumbed to the wear and tear of time.

"Now, in its place stands a pleasant red-bricked building with blue tiles, bright curtains and gay paint, and last week, the Lord Mayor of London, the Lady Mayoress, the Sheriffs and their ladies, were officially welcomed to the Borough for the reopening ceremony.

"Match-sellers, newspaper vendors, charwomen, waitresses, all sorts and conditions of hard-working but homeless women, will once more find a comfortable lodging at a price they can pay—a shilling a night for a good bed, hot bath, hot tea and bread and butter night and morning. No questions are asked, but those needing help and counsel will have every possible assistance, and the smiling face of the matron, who for ten years was mother to the homeless, will once again greet them.

"One of the finest things about these houses is the homely, comfortable atmosphere you can feel the moment you enter. The common-room is always crowded, noisy, merry; the water in the really luxurious bathrooms is invariably boiling hot, and these rooms are equipped with wash-basins and foot-baths, too; the dormitories are quiet, airy and large. In fact, throughout the whole house there is a cosy intimate feeling of home, so that you might rather think that you were in a private house than in a lodging-house for poor people."—*Queen, October 14th, 1937.*

"The Meeting held last Friday at Lyndhurst Road Congregational Church, under the auspices of the North-West Branch of the Women's League, will be long remembered by those who heard Mrs. Denston Fennelle's interesting talk on the Cecil Houses. Mrs. Herford introduced the lecturer, a member of the Executive Committee, who gave a full and vivid account of these houses for homeless women in London, which are the fulfilment of Mrs. Cecil Chesterton's dreams.

"Mrs. Chesterton tested at first hand the conditions under which London's homeless women live, by herself going penniless to work as a casual labourer in their midst. She found that only a small percentage of public lodging-house accommodation was available for women, and that most of it was dirty, unpleasant and repulsive. Convinced of the need for lodging-houses where women might obtain shelter, cleanliness, warmth and kindness, with no questions asked, she established the first Cecil House, since which four others have been opened.

"The Cecil Houses are all self-supporting and are an unspeakable boon to the women who use them and who find there an absence of officialdom. There is no attempt to pry into their affairs or to question them in any way.

"At the close of the Meeting, Mrs. Turner thanked the speaker and expressed the appreciation of all present."—*Hampstead News, October 21st, 1937.*

"Queen Mary paid a private visit yesterday to Cecil House, Devonshire Street, London. There are now five Cecil Houses in London, providing cheap accommodation nightly for down-and-out women.

"When the first, that in Devonshire Street, was opened ten years ago, Queen Mary showed her interest by giving a substantial cheque, an arm-chair, and an umbrella-stand, and she has since given two cots, a clock, an overmantel, and a framed portrait of herself to the other houses.

"Yesterday, arriving to see the rebuilt premises which were opened three weeks ago, she added to her gifts a fireside box, a rug, a cushion for the matron and another for the assistant matron and two tea-trays.

"Queen Mary expressed herself highly pleased with the new premises, where down-and-out women are provided with bed, bath, breakfast, and facilities for washing their clothes at a shilling a night."—*Liverpool Daily Post, November 6th, 1937.*

"Queen Mary, accompanied by Lady Cynthia Colville, yesterday saw how women 'down-and-outs' live in public lodging-houses. Her visit was a private one to a 'Cecil House', in Devonshire Street, Theobalds Road, which was opened three weeks ago after the old premises, opened ten years ago, had been rebuilt.

"Her Majesty was received by the Hon. Margaret Bigge and Mrs. Cecil Chesterton, the founder of Cecil Houses for down-and-outs. She brought with her a number of gifts, including two trays, a fireside box and a rug. She presented the matron and assistant matron with a cushion each.

"Queen Mary visited the old house in Devonshire Street before it was opened ten years ago, and one of the first persons she recognised yesterday was Mrs. Price, with whom she shook hands, remarking: 'This is the lady of the chair.' She was referring to an arm-chair which she presented to the house for Mrs. Price on her previous visit. When she saw the chair later in her visit, she ordered it to be mended at her expense.

"After looking over the house Queen Mary told Mrs. Chesterton how pleased she was with the work.

"Accommodation and food is provided for a shilling a night, but anyone without a home and no money is admitted without any charge."—*Birmingham Post, November 6th, 1937.*

"Once upon a time there was a famous novelist, and because he was a famous novelist he knew several rich friends who could afford to stay at the most expensive hotels.

"Now one night this famous novelist went to dine with one of those rich friends at a big London hotel. It was a cold night, and when, well warmed and well fed, he left the hotel, he saw a row of men and women standing huddled all along the blank side-walk.

"He could not make out what they were doing, so he stopped and spoke to one of the men.

"'Well, sir, it's like this,' said he. 'We've come 'ere for a bit o' warmth. This 'ere's the wall of the kitchen, see, and it's a sight warmer standin' by it than freezin' on the Embankment these nights.'

"And the famous novelist went away very thoughtful—for there were about sixty people standing in that queue, who hadn't a home nor a bed to go to on that cold winter's night.

"Now that might be a fairy story—except that there's no happy ending—but it is not.

"The famous novelist was Dr. A. J. Cronin, and this experience happened to him only last winter.

"What appalled him most about that pathetic row of people was the fact that there were women in it—women, friendless, destitute, with nowhere to put their tired bodies in the long interval of darkness which lay between one weary day's search for work and the next.

"But although life in London to the destitute and homeless women is very far from being a fairy story, they have a real fairy godmother in Mrs. Cecil Chesterton. She has for years been working to provide for the women Dr. Cronin saw, and for the many others like them, a warm lodging and a comfortable bed, and a place from which they can emerge next morning refreshed and heartened for what the day may bring.

"The first of the five Cecil Houses—recently closed down for rebuilding—has just been reopened. A spacious cheery place, it has a blazing fire in the sitting-room, nine-bedded dormitories where comfortable beds are covered with gay counterpanes.

"But most important in the eyes of its 'guests' are the bathrooms and the laundry. With unlimited hot water and soap, irons, and mending facilities, one can clean up thoroughly, wash, iron, and repair one's things and present a bold front to the world once more.

"Who are the 'guests' for which the Cecil Houses provide? It is a point of honour not to ask questions, but to receive whomsoever applies for shelter without probing into the whys and wherefores.

"But the scraps of confidences given, the snatches of talk as the tired women and girls, sipping hot tea, sit round the fire, peaceful in the knowledge that they have a bed for the night, reveal pitiful stories of courage in adversity which strike home to the heart.

"Not sensational, these stories. Not the sort to make newspaper headlines, but none the less poignant for that.

"Londoners still remember 'Old Kate', the matchseller, the story of whose life was first told in *Everybody's*, who sat at her pitch on the corner of Aldwych and the Strand until she died eighteen months ago.

"Old Kate, lover of life and gaiety, ex-actress, married three times, spent with a flourish the fortune of £25,000 left her by her last husband, and came at last, penniless, to the gutter and match-selling.

"Her home for every night of her last few years was at Cecil House, where she would sit by the fire, gravely taking snuff and recalling her past glories.

"Less spectacular is the tale of Eliza. Eliza and her husband lived in Durham.

". . . But times are hard there, and life on the Means Test did not seem too rosy. So one morning Eliza and Bill set off to walk to London, putting all their belongings—including the baby—in the perambulator, which they pushed turn and turn about.

"It's a long way from Durham to London, but they reached the suburbs at dusk, and wandered through miles of streets, bewildered and friendless, with Eliza dropping from exhaustion and the baby crying weakly with hunger.

"At last a kindly policeman pointed the way to a Cecil House, where Bill had the pleasure of seeing a friendly smile and welcoming hands—'Yes, of course she can stay here, and the baby too'—before he went off to doss in St. Martin's Crypt for the night.

"And stay there Eliza did, for several nights, until, rested and well cared for, she was able to join Bill, whose search for work had not proved fruitless, in a 'place of their own'.

"Poor Agnes, though, wasn't so lucky. . . .

"Agnes appeared one day, pale and exhausted, but with a gracious bearing and carriage, and an air of dignified reserve.

"At length Agnes found temporary work as a nursemaid, and she left the Cecil House and took a small room of her own.

"Some weeks later the matron had a letter from Agnes's sister: 'Thank you for being so good to Agnes,' it ran. 'Your kindness was in her mind even in the last bitter moments of her life. She wrote about you in the letter she left for us—before she died of starvation in the garret from which she had been too proud to ask for help.'

"What sad story of family estrangement and bitterness lies behind that tragedy will never be known. But one can imagine the proud sister walking out from the comfortable home where she passed so many years, with head held high, and fierce determination in her heart to die rather than go back. . . .

"These are but a few of the endless procession of gallant women who pass each night through the friendly doorways of the Cecil Houses."—*Everybody's Weekly, November 6th, 1937.*

"Miss Henrietta Corder is one of the most enterprising little women in Kensington. Small, bright-eyed, for more than twenty years she has earned her living by all types of upholstery—big box springs, chair springs, carpet repairing, all come under her capable fingers, and before she took up this work she was an expert needlewoman.

"But times are not what they were—big firms have almost crowded out the individual worker and it is not so easy nowadays to keep constantly in touch with those who are still willing to 'have a woman in by the day'.

"Miss Corder goes all over the country—proud and independent, and though times are sometimes cruelly hard she never despairs but moves from place to place looking for jobs. 'Round about quarter day is the best time for me,' she told a representative of the *Kensington News*. 'If I'm on the spot as people are moving in there's usually something that needs repairing as it

comes out of the van. In the old home you may not notice where a chair is sagging badly, or a sofa has broken down, but in a new place it shows up and that's where I come in.'

"Miss Corder has just repaired at Cecil House for homeless women, in Devonshire Street, Holborn, the chair which Queen Mary presented for the use of the Matron some ten years ago. Her Majesty paid a return visit to this House recently and noticing that the springs in her gift were rather the worse for wear graciously said: 'Have the chair mended and send the bill to me.'

"The Royal promise was recorded in the newspapers the next day and at once Cecil House received a businesslike note from Miss Corder—she would like to mend the chair. Her enterprise beat that of the big firms!

"Interviewed at the Cecil House office, Miss Corder told of some of the people for whom she had worked in the past—of the antiques entrusted to her for renovation; valuable possessions that have come under her hands in the houses of well-known actors and actresses.

"Miss Corder got the job of mending Queen Mary's gift, and carried it out well! A proper reward for her acumen!

"But there is also a wistful side to this story, of courage and determination of a little woman well past her middle years.

"'It is not possible for me to keep a home going now,' she said. 'You see, sometimes there is work and sometimes there isn't. But you can always find Henrietta by her Box Number in Kensington.'

"'Yes, Miss Corder is one of the characters of Kensington.'—*Kensington News, December 10th, 1937.*

"Whilst reading in Lincoln's Inn Fields, one summer evening I got into conversation with two women at the other end of the seat. They were both between 50 and 60 years of age. One had been a teacher in Rome and had travelled a great deal, the other was a widow. They were both down on their luck and had been living for some time in a Cecil House at King's Cross. Over a cup of coffee later they described to me the life and conditions in these houses. My curiosity was aroused, and I wanted to know more details, so I determined to find out.

"Choosing a Friday prior to a Saturday 'off' and donning my oldest clothes, emptying my handbag of any articles of value and taking with me a couple of shillings, I boarded a bus for the Waterloo Road, arriving at Cecil House at 8.15 p.m.

"On entering I met the Matron, a charming woman of about forty, with dark hair and wearing a white overall. I asked whether she had a spare bed for the night, and she replied that she had. Then, taking my name, she enquired whether I had been there before. On telling her I was a new-comer she informed me the charge was a shilling a night, which included a bed, a cup of tea and biscuits in the evening, a cup of tea and a slice of bread and butter in the morning, and a hot bath either at night or in the morning if desired. She then showed me round the house.

"I followed her into a large wash-place with wash-basins on the left, bathrooms on the right and foot-baths down the centre. Leading from this was an outer room with sinks where she said I could wash out any clothes if I wished and hang them on the warm rails to dry. At the far end of this room was a mangle. We reached the foot of a flight of stairs and she informed me my bed was No. 14 and that I should find it on the first floor in a room on the right. She thought I might like to see it before coming down for a cup of tea, which she was about to make.

"On reaching the top of the stairs I entered a room in which there were eight beds, with blue bed covers inscribed 'Cecil House'. By the side of each bed was a wooden locker, which would serve as a table, chair or cupboard. I opened mine and noticed a peculiar odour, and seeing something lying at the back drew out a bad egg, which must have passed unnoticed for some time! I turned down the sheets and found them to be quite clean.

"In the common-room were women of all types and ages, from young girls of 17 to old ladies of 70, some looking very poor and shabby, others quite

well dressed. They were sitting at tables talking and smoking. In one corner was a group playing cards. I made my way to a vacant chair, handed my cigarette-case round to those near me and waited.

"Mugs of tea were being brought round, together with a large tin of biscuits. The woman on my left refused the tea, as it kept her awake at night, and told me in confidence that she had had a glass of beer before she came in, and that she only came very occasionally just to suit her convenience, but as she retired to bed very early, saying she liked 'to get away from it all'. I wondered.

"At the next table an elderly woman produced two sausage rolls and pushing them across the table to her companion, said: 'Have one of these, dear; you haven't had anything to eat all day.'

"The general atmosphere of the place was one of friendliness, kindness and courtesy. I gazed round the room; the curtains were blue, the wood-work orange, the floor a deep-red composition, and the walls distempered yellow and adorned with posters from the Underground railways. The building was centrally heated.

"One very pretty and well-dressed woman came in, and seemed quite well known there. I remarked on this to the woman next to me, who told me that if a woman were terribly hard up, or wanted to secure a position where a good appearance is essential, the Matron would give her clothes from the supply sent to Cecil House.

"At 8.45 p.m. the House was full, not a bed to be had. The Cecil Houses close at 10 a.m. and reopen at 8 p.m. and remain open all night, but unless a woman can be sure of arriving by 8.30 p.m. it is advisable for her to book her bed in the morning.

"A girl started to strum dance music on the piano, and two others stood by her and sang.

"An Irish girl on my right informed me she was over from Belfast for a week to visit a very old aunt and uncle who were not long for this world, and would soon pass over. She had intended staying with a girl friend living in London, but on going to her friend's flat was informed by the landlady that her friend had moved and left no address. She could not afford to put up at a hotel, so had come to Cecil House.

"At about 10 p.m. most of the older women had retired. We decided to have a wash and go to our beds.

"At 12.15 a.m. we were all awakened by the light being switched on and a girl of a very low type burst into the room and stamped across to the bed beside mine with a lot of unnecessary noise. Seven forms sat up in bed and seven pairs of eyes glared. But this was not all we were to endure. The girl had not been in bed long before she started to scratch her head furiously for what seemed about five minutes. Audible sounds of disgust came from a woman in another bed. The scratching ceased for a while, then started afresh. This time the other woman muttered in exasperation: 'Scratch! Scratch! Scratch!' The scratching subsided and all was quiet.

"Awakened next morning at 8 o'clock by the loud ringing of a bell I looked round the room to find all but two beds empty, and their occupants flown! Dressing hurriedly, I went downstairs, and found a number of women having their morning tea in the common-room. Taking my mug of tea and slice of bread and butter to a table I was joined shortly by the Irish girl I had spoken to the previous night.

"Noticing I had a copy of *Gibbon Stamp Monthly* in my hand (which I had taken with me in case I wished to appear to be reading!) she promised to send me some rare American stamps which had been given her to pass on to two small nephews. We exchanged addresses, and at 9 o'clock I bid her farewell, left Cecil House, and jumped on a bus outside for home and a disinfected bath.

"The Cecil House in Devonshire Street, Bloomsbury, which has been rebuilt, was opened on Thursday, October 7th. These Houses, once the initial expense of building has been met, are self-supporting. The Matrons, though paid workers, are kind, sympathetic and tactful. No questions are

asked. Women who wish to stay for more than one night may leave their suit-cases and bundles with the Matron, who keeps them under lock and key.

"Voluntary workers help with the teas and relieve the Matron once or twice a week. Old clothes, especially shoes and stockings, are urgently needed.

"The Cecil House reports were given away at the opening, and many of Mrs. Cecil Chesterton's excellent books were on sale, including 'I Lived in a Slum', 6d.; 'In Darkest London', 1s. The profits from these books go to the Cecil Houses."—E. L. Newland in *The Ibis Magazine*, November 1937.

". . . No politician of the front rank is included (in The Honours List), nor man of letters, playwright, musician, artist, yet it recognises and rewards a wide variety of merit in the national life. Public service of another kind is recognised by the award of the O.B.E. to Mrs. Cecil Chesterton, the founder in her husband's memory of public lodging-houses for homeless women. Higher honours may have come to other women, but none that women will more highly approve."—*Birmingham Post*, January 1st, 1938.

"Our readers will be delighted to learn of the honour conferred on Mrs. Cecil Chesterton at the New Year. Her regular contributions to *G. K.'s Weekly*, under the nom de plume J. K. Prothero, have long delighted those interested in the drama. We offer to Mrs. Chesterton our sincerest congratulations on her well-deserved honour. It is more than fitting that the wonderful personal work done by Mrs. Chesterton on behalf of the destitute women of London should be recognised."—*G. K.'s Weekly*, January 6th, 1938.

"Among the women honoured, nurses will be specially interested in Dr. Barrie Lambert, of the London County Council (D.B.E.), and Mrs. Cecil Chesterton, founder of the Cecil Public Lodging-Houses for homeless women (O.B.E.)."—*Nursing Times*, January 8th, 1938.

"London's 'Shilling a night' hotels formed the subject of an address by Mrs. E. Gordon Phillips, at an American Tea in aid of Hull Vigilance Association, in the Reception Room of the Guildhall, Hull, yesterday.

"Mrs. Phillips is the assistant organiser of the 'Cecil Houses', London, which give shelter to vagrant women, providing them for 1s. per night with clean beds, washing accommodation, food, and when necessary, clothes.

"No questions are asked: no one passing through the city, homeless and alone, need go through the humiliating process of answering dozens of inquiries which seem to have no bearing on the often urgent need of a cup of tea and some bread and butter.

"There are five houses in London, the outcome of the experience of Mrs. Cecil Chesterton, who for ten days lived the life of a down-and-out woman, and saw the conditions under which they have to live. While in London the municipal bodies supply sleeping room at reasonable charges for men, it is left largely to private enterprise and philanthropic societies to cater for women, and Mrs. Chesterton's book, 'In Darkest London', tells the story of her experiences, and of her contacts with these homeless people. Queen Mary has shown her sympathy with the work, sending gifts to the houses, visiting one of them before its opening, and remembering them with gifts at Christmas.

"Over 200 guests attended yesterday's effort, and Canon E. Arthur Berry, M.A., R.D., presided."—*Daily Mail (Hull)*, February 2nd, 1938.

"Most of us read for pleasure and few of us enjoy reading a book just because we 'ought to read it'. So it was not because I wanted to read about the life of the underworld of London streets that I picked up 'Women of the



"THE DOOR RE-OPENED"

London Underworld', but because I have long admired the author, Mrs. Cecil Chesterton, for the work she has done amongst women unable to help themselves.

"Founding houses where women could get a night's lodging and food at a standard rate of 1s. appealed to my practical mind. Her personal sacrifices to understand these women compelled my admiration. So it was my tribute to her to buy her book published in the Chevron Series at 6d., and a further tribute that I began to read it.

"My reward lasted all through my reading. The sordidness of many of the stories did not worry me; I was gripped by their drama. Here were *real* life stories of such interest that they fascinated me far more than any novel could, and I was seeing the drama of the lives of women I sit next to in the bus and pass in the street. They are women like me, and I live their stories as I read them and wonder what would have happened to me in like circumstances. Mrs. Chesterton writes so well and her comments are so balanced that one feels the same tenseness as one gets in a comfortable seat seeing a first-class play.

"The writer's sense of humour gives her an insight and balance which must be of immeasurable help in her contacts. One feels that there is no patronage in her helping hand. These qualities make her book very readable and unconsciously invite us to understand the lives of those around us and to wonder how we ourselves can help too. When putting the book down I felt I had learnt a lot about the outlook of the younger generation and once more I marvelled at the great courage of women under adverse circumstances. A really enjoyable book. Get it."—W. L. N. in *The Trade Unionist*, February, 1938.

"As damning an indictment as has ever been delivered of a social system which all but drives the destitute girl in London down the slippery slope to the underworld, was provided last week by Mrs. Cecil Chesterton, novelist, journalist, playwright, and traveller, who was honoured by the King with an O.B.E. last month.*

"To get at the truth Social Worker Chesterton put on rags and posed as a down-and-out, in course of which experiment she discovered that London houses syndicates which rent and furnish West End flats, install young girls in them, and take the bulk of their immoral earnings. Hyde Park she exposes as 'one of the forcing grounds of prostitution'. Parking of cars is forbidden, and the regular formula for women is to move to the kerb as a driver passes slowly by and wait for a suitable overture. Once in the car she is taken to a roadhouse, given drinks and food, and maybe a dance or a moonlight dive in a bathing pool. In return a variety of cuddling is permitted, but generally it stops short of full intimacy. Half a crown, at the most five shillings, is handed over in the small hours of the morning when the girl is put down.'

"Old hands at this method have a jargon of their own. One woman told Mrs. Chesterton: 'A young man will ask you when you get into the car, "Have you brought your skates?" That means, if you don't do what he wants, you will have to get back the best way you can—you can skate home. . . .' Yet hundreds of homeless wanderers who want to use Hyde Park as a dormitory are forbidden 'except under pressure of national festivities.' During the day from 5.30 a.m. the Park is open to all, but when a midnight syren screeches closing time the homeless are ferreted out by searchlights, and sent into the streets to sleep in doorways, cellars, and dustbins.

"The professional dance partner in London's lower-class night clubs is expected not only to dance, but to 'sit out' in her own rooms with any client who cares to ask the favour, 'without even the choice possessed by the street woman'. In many of these dives abnormal sex relations thrive. Between a man and a male youth such relationships are punishable by law, but not between women.

From 10s. to £1 a week rooms are let out in London to old men who indulge in flagellation. The proprietresses also supply the young girls and the

*"Women of the London Underworld", Queensway Press, 6d. net. Also from the offices of Cecil Houses (Inc.).

equipment needed for these excesses, 'and receive large sums for arranging the whole business'. The girls are paid only a few shillings.

"Horried by such discoveries, Mrs. Chesterton founded the Cecil Public Lodging Houses, where a woman can get bed, tea, and bread and butter, bath, and facilities for washing clothes, for 1s. a night. The only rule enforced is that no questions are asked. Young girls from the provinces who have fallen on unhappy days will do anything to prevent their folk learning what has happened. Older women also delight in shedding their personalities and taking new ones. One battered old creature who presents herself at Cecil House usually asks for a bed in the name of Greta Garbo. This assumption of new identity accounts for the large number of so-called missing girls.

"Prison arrangements for women, Mrs. Chesterton finds, are vastly better than they were. In Holloway gaol the cell is a brightly lit room with a wide window, a hospital-type bed, and proper washing arrangements. It used to be common for distraught women prisoners to smash up their cells. The punishment for this was a bread and water diet in a subterranean cellar. Nowadays, before a prisoner reaches a state of violence her condition is realised and tended. Convicted mothers are no longer separated from their babies. The infants are cared for in a nursery, and at night and meal times are put in a small cot in the mother's cell. Food is 'not too bad'. Breakfast is cocoa, bread and margarine; lunch is soup or stew or fish, or some sort of pudding, with a joint every other day. About five comes the last meal of cocoa, bread and margarine, but it leaves an uncomfortable vacuum inside.

"Even prison inmates cannot resist the temptation to 'make-up'. Face-powder is prohibited, and some women beautify themselves by scraping whitewash off the wall and squeezing red out of remnants of cloth in the workroom. 'Unless this facial decoration is too hectic, the official eye is often blind.'

"In Mrs. Chesterton's view the only thing that will solve the problem of the lonely, roofless girl in London is the establishment all over London of residential clubs offering accommodation at rates within her earning capacity."—*News Review, February 10th, 1938.*

"It is pleasant to find Mrs. Cecil Chesterton among those decorated with the O.B.E. at this week's investiture at Buckingham Palace. Queen Mary has long been interested in her work for the homeless women of London, and sends gifts to the lodgers and matrons of the Cecil Houses every Christmas.

"Mrs. Cecil Chesterton never fails to pay a weekly visit to each of her five London lodging-houses—where, up to date, nearly 700,000 women and 40,000 children have been accommodated—and is eager to see more established.

"The most urgent problem now is provided by the crowds of young girls who keep pouring into London from the provinces,' she said recently. 'These girls frequently earn less than a pound a week in jobs demanding good appearance. When they have got their hair waved and bought themselves silk stockings, what have they left to live on?'

"Although Mrs. Chesterton's latest book, 'Women of the London Underworld', is only just out, she is already planning another to be called 'Woman Adrift'. In this she hopes to deal with the folly of keeping women out of forms of social work where their services would obviously be most valuable: as relieving officers and members of large housing trusts, for example."—*The Star, February 17th, 1938.*

"Journalists have often worked hard to expose wrong social conditions and to improve them; few can point to such practical results from their work as Mrs. Cecil Chesterton. To-day she goes to Buckingham Palace to receive from H.M. The King the O.B.E. which he conferred on her in the New Year Honours.

"It is sad to think that she is the only one left of that gallant trilogy of which the other two were Cecil Chesterton, her husband, killed, as I

remember, during the War, and Gilbert Keith Chesterton, who died not long ago.

"Mrs. Chesterton will see published this month her latest book, 'Women of the Underworld', yet another work in which she stresses the urgent need of cheaper hostels for working girls earning from 18s. to £1 a week.

"The author's personal investigation of the abyss in which many of these girls have to live is one of the sagas of the twentieth century—a saga which appealed strongly to the quixotic adventuring spirit of her famous brother-in-law."—*World's Press News, February 17th, 1938.*

"Queen Mary, paying a private visit in mail week to Cecil House, Devonshire Street, London, met the matron whom she had not seen for ten years. 'Ah, I remember—is this not the lady of the chair?' she asked. Queen Mary remembered that, ten years ago, she had given an arm-chair to the house for the matron.

"During her stay Queen Mary saw the same chair, and sat down in it. 'It needs repairing,' she said to Mrs. Cecil Chesterton, founder of the house. 'Have the spring mended and send the bill to me.'

"There are now five Cecil Houses in London where down-and-out women are provided with bed, bath, breakfast, and facilities for washing their clothes at a shilling a night. When the first, that in Devonshire Street, was opened ten years ago, Queen Mary showed her interest by giving a substantial cheque, an arm-chair, and an umbrella-stand, and she has since given two cots, a clock, and overmantel, and a framed portrait of herself to the other houses. Recently she added to her gifts a fireside-box, a rug, a cushion for the matron, and another for the assistant matron, and two tea trays."—*Ceylon Observer, November 30th, 1937.*

GIFTS OF SHOES, COATS, SKIRTS, JUMPERS,
UNDERWEAR, OLD LINEN, ETC., FOR FREE
DISTRIBUTION TO THOSE WHO NEED THEM
MOST, WILL BE GRATEFULLY RECEIVED AT
34/35 BOSWELL STREET (*late* Devonshire Street),
HOLBORN, W.C.1.

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

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

179 HARROW ROAD, W.2.

266 WATERLOO ROAD, S.E.1.

OR AT

11 GOLDEN SQUARE, W.1.

CECIL HOUSES
Combined Houses Income and Expenditure Account

EXPENDITURE

	Devonshire Street.	Wharfdale Road.	Kensal Road.	Harrow Road.	Waterloo Road.
	£ s. d.	£ s. d.	£ s. d.	£ s. d.	£ s. d.
To Salaries and Insurance	81 3 3	386 6 3	221 3 11	375 19 8	327 5 8
„ Relief Duty	4 10 6	9 14 0	12 11 6	6 4 3	16 19 3
„ Stationery	5	6	7 5	4 0	1 0
„ Postage	4 0	8 0	8 0	14 0	10 0
„ Telephone	5 17 5	10 16 4	10 16 7	12 18 10	12 19 11
„ Gas... ..	5 11 0	9 9 5	16 19 9	18 12 4	19 14 6
„ Electricity	12 13 6	18 14 8	30 4 4	23 14 0	23 11 8
„ Insurance	7 1 0	14 4 5	14 9 5	16 11 3	14 7 5
„ Cleaning	4 15 10	21 6 10	13 15 6	21 0 2	15 13 3
„ Repairs	8 0	141 9 11	31 5 11	66 14 3	64 10 11
„ Replacements	13 10	58 7 1	11 7 8	98 16 7	27 17 7
„ Laundry	6 16 4	41 4 1	39 8 3	63 9 2	45 12 0
„ Coal and Coke	10 8 6	29 19 3	20 12 7	42 12 1	31 10 4
„ General Rate	7 16 3	73 12 0	43 4 0	103 10 0	92 6 0
„ Water Rate	10 0 10	14 3 0	11 5 9	18 10 10	20 3 6
„ Travelling Expenses	2 0	15 9	1 7 8	2 5 9	10 0
„ Milk	3 2 1	12 13 7	11 0 4	12 3 6	21 15 10
„ Bread	2 0 1	11 13 10	9 9 5	8 1 11	13 9 0
„ Provisions	9 1 8	28 7 3	21 5 8	28 4 11	34 11 4
„ General Charges	1 12 10	5 3 0	5 13 3	4 6 3	5 9 6
„ <i>Excess of Income over Expenditure</i>	27 0 1	71 5 10	45 16 7	49 2 9	111 4 4
£	200 19 5	959 15 0	572 13 6	973 16 6	900 3 0

Note: The Devonshire Street House

(INCORPORATED).
for the year ended 31st December, 1937.

INCOME

	Devonshire 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 ...	153 1 0	909 15 3	504 19 6	956 0 0	870 18 0
„ Endowments ...	20 0 0	17 16 9	63 16 0	10 10 0	27 7 0
„ Interest on War Loan and Post Office Savings ...	27 18 5	32 3 0	3 18 0	7 6 6	1 18 0
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