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# CECIL HOUSES

[INCORPORATED]

FIFTH REPORT

1932



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Pamphlet

CECIL HOUSES

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

FIFTH  
REPORT

*December, 1932.*



*Offices:*  
11 GOLDEN SQUARE  
LONDON

W. 1

TELEPHONE: GERRARD 3391.

CECIL HOUSES  
(INCORPORATED)  
WOMEN'S PUBLIC LODGING HOUSE  
FUND.

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MRS. DENZIL TWENTYMAN.

OFFICE:

11, Golden Square, London, W. 1. Telephone No.—Gerrard 3391.

303.2850491 (CC)

# CECIL HOUSES (Inc.)

## Women's Public Lodging House Fund.

Telephone: GERRARD 3391.

11, GOLDEN SQUARE,  
LONDON, W.1.

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Mr. D. G. Somerville, M.P.

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Mrs. Cecil Chesterton.

*Asst. Organiser:*  
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Messrs. Knott & Collins, FF.R.I.B.A.,  
14 John St., Adelphi, W.C. 2.

*Hon. Solicitors:*  
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41 Moorgate Street, E.C.

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Messrs. Harwood, Banner & Son,  
56 Moorgate, E.C.

*Bankers:*  
Messrs. Barclays,  
366 Strand, W.C. 2.

*Hon. Physician:*  
Harold Sington, Esq., M.D.,  
62 Porchester Terrace, W.2.

*In response to your appeal I request you to enter me as an annual subscriber to Cecil Houses (Inc.), and enclose subscription value £.....for the year 193*

*Name.....*

*Address.....*

*Cheques should be crossed Barclays Bank, and made payable to the Hon. Treasurer, Cecil Houses (Inc.).*

363.59209421 CEC

# CECIL HOUSES (INC.)

## Women's Public Lodging House Fund.

11, GOLDEN SQUARE, LONDON, W.1. Telephone: GERRARD 3391.

Asst. Organiser:  
Miss F. Gordon-Anderson

Hon. Physician:  
Harold Sinton, F.R.C.S., M.D.  
25 Portico Street, W.1.

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Mrs. N. C. Jones  
Mrs. O. C. Jones  
Mrs. P. C. Jones  
Mrs. Q. C. Jones  
Mrs. R. C. Jones  
Mrs. S. C. Jones  
Mrs. T. C. Jones  
Mrs. U. C. Jones  
Mrs. V. C. Jones  
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Mrs. X. C. Jones  
Mrs. Y. C. Jones  
Mrs. Z. C. Jones

Cheques should be crossed Barclays Bank, and made payable to the Hon. Treasurer, Cecil Houses (Inc.).

In response to your appeal, I request you to enter me as an annual subscriber to

for

Address

Name

CECIL HOUSES

WOMEN'S PUBLIC LODGING HOUSE

FUND

363.59209421 CEC

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11, Golden Square, London, W.1. Telephone No.—Gerrard 3391.

OFFICE:

## 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 become 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 whatever.

## HOUSES.

No. 35, Devonshire Street, Theobald's Road, W.C. 1.

*Tel. No.—Holborn 4466.*

Nos. 47/51, Wharfdale Road, King's Cross, N. 1.

*Tel. No.—Terminus 6996.*

No. 194, Kensal Road, N. Kensington, W. 10.

*Tel. No.—Park 8917.*

No. 179, Harrow Road, W. 2.

*Tel. No.—Paddington 3973.*

No. 266, Waterloo Road, S.E. 1.

*(To be opened shortly.)*

ANNUAL SUBSCRIPTIONS AND DONATIONS  
SHOULD BE MADE PAYABLE TO THE HON.  
TREASURER, MAJOR J. BRUNEL COHEN, J.P.,  
AT THE OFFICES OF THE FUND,  
11, GOLDEN SQUARE, W. 1.

OF  
LONDON'S PUBLIC LODGING HOUSE  
ACCOMMODATION  
87% IS AVAILABLE FOR MEN  
WOMEN STILL HAVE 13% ONLY.

CECIL HOUSES EXIST TO REMEDY THIS DISCREPANCY

AT

35, DEVONSHIRE STREET, THEOBALD'S ROAD, 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.

AND

266, WATERLOO ROAD, S.E. 1.

(To be opened shortly.)

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."—*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).*

## *Fifth Report*

1932.

It is with great pleasure that the Committee are able to state that the Fifth Cecil House is now definitely on its way towards completion.

Immediately after the publication of the last Report negotiations for the property then under consideration fell through, but a site was later bought for the sum of £2,350 at No. 266, Waterloo Road, S.E. 1., a neighbourhood where a Women's Public Lodging House is badly needed.

Building operations are going ahead and when the House is ready it will accommodate some fifty women.

The construction of the premises will absorb all our available Funds and when the time comes for completion it will be necessary to find money for the equipment. For this reason we are trying our hardest to raise every penny we can so that the necessary funds will be in hand when the urgent necessity for their expenditure arrives.

Waterloo Road is a particularly crowded area and the Committee are convinced they should concentrate on the speedy erection of the Fifth House which should be ready to open its doors by the Autumn.

Continual unemployment drives an additional number of young people from the provinces to London in the hope of getting work, only to find upon arrival that there are few if any jobs available and that they have no place wherein to sleep.

There has never been a time when beds were so gravely needed as at present. Our Matrons are constantly being approached by the police and other authorities for help in accommodating girls and women discovered walking the streets.

To meet in some way this distress it has been arranged that the Police in certain areas can send the most necessitous cases to Cecil Houses for a free night's lodging, the cost being defrayed from the Needy Fund subscribed for this special purpose. Certain responsible people, as for instance Probation Officers, Police Court Missionaries, Welfare Societies and Charitable Guilds, have also

an understanding with our Matrons whereby any stranded woman can be sent to Cecil Houses and the money for her bed sent on at specified intervals.

The facts, as stated by Mrs. Cecil Chesterton in her book "In Darkest London"\* showed that while Municipal Bodies supply ample sleeping room at reasonable charges for men, it is left to Philanthropic Societies and private enterprise to cater for women. The disparity between Public Lodging Houses for Men and those for Women is still very great, only 13 per cent. of the total licensed sleeping accommodation in London being available for the latter.

Up to date Four Houses have been established :—

March 28th, 1927—35, Devonshire Street, W.C. 1. for 44 women and 2 babies (opened by the Lord Mayor of London).

January 18th, 1928—47/51, Wharfdale Road, King's Cross, N. 1. for 58 women and 12 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).

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; and the Piccadilly Theatre when Mr. J. A. Cairns (Thames Police Court Magistrate); Lady Violet Bonham-Carter; The Bishop of Woolwich; Lord Hugh Cecil, M.P., The Rev. Vincent McNabb, O.P.; The Very Rev. The Chief Rabbi, Dr. Hertz; Mr. St. John Ervine; Lady 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.-Colonel Robert Loraine, D.S.O.; Miss Ellen Wilkinson; Miss Marion Lorne; Dr. Morton (Governor of Holloway Prison); Mr. R. C. Sherriff; Commander Oliver Locker-Lampson, C.M.G., D.S.O., M.P.; Miss Maude Royden; Miss Peggy Ashcroft; Mr. Cedric Hardwicke and Mr. Ian Hay spoke of the urgent need of beds for homeless women and in support of the work of Cecil Houses.

\*Copies of "In Darkest London" (Price 2/6d. postage 5d.) published by Stanley Paul & Co., can be obtained from Cecil Houses, 11, Golden Square, W. 1.

In order to raise Funds towards the Fifth House a Public Meeting was also held at the Cambridge Theatre (by kind permission of Associated Theatre Properties (London) Ltd.) on Friday, November 18th, 1932. Mr. Adrian Moreing, M.P. took the Chair and the speakers included Miss Sheila Kaye-Smith, Miss Helena Pickard, Mr. Louis Golding, Mr. J. B. Priestley and Mr. Ernest Milton. As a result of the meeting the sum of £1,200 was collected.

Cecil Houses open at 8 p.m. 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), all 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.

No woman actually in need of a bed is ever turned away because she has not the money to pay for it. The requisite shilling is paid from the "Needy Fund," already referred to, which is contributed by friends and quite distinct and apart from the General Fund. This, of course, cannot be generally stated, but each Matron has power to deal with all such cases.

It should be pointed out that the Houses do not open before 8 p.m. because if that were done all the beds would be booked up so quickly that it would leave late workers little chance of securing a night's lodging.

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 enquired into, nor the reasons why they have come to a common lodging house. It is sufficient that a bed is wanted.

The women gladly make use of the facilities supplied for washing their clothing and in the majority of instances the opportunity of a bath is welcomed. Cecil Houses are run on the same lines as an hotel in that no lodger is required to take any part in the cleaning, bed-making, etc.

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. There are also married women with children who through the housing shortage are unable to find a home. Many 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.



Enquiries are frequently made 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 these cases, however, 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.

During the past year a woman doctor has visited each House every fortnight and given her invaluable advice to the lodgers—women, girls and young infants—entirely without fee. The kindness of manufacturers and wholesale druggists has supplied us with first aid necessities, simple remedies and nutritious patent foods which, given under the directions of the doctor, have proved of great value both to the mothers and their children.

The supervision of each House is in the hands of the House Committee acting with the Matron and the Staff, which includes an assistant, a general help, cleaners and a night portress. The duties of the House Committee, many and arduous, cover the unpacking and distribution of clothes, taking control during the Matron's absence, and the maintenance of general co-operation. The Committee have also to thank a number of outside helpers who have deputised for the assistant matrons during their evenings off duty and rendered continuous and unfailing service in very many ways.

WITH THE CO-OPERATION OF FRIENDS AND SUPPORTERS WE HAVE BEEN ABLE TO FIND EMPLOYMENT FOR 731 WOMEN AND GIRLS AS GENERAL SERVANTS, WAITRESSES, CHAMBERMAIDS, AND DAILY HELPS. THE MAJORITY OF THESE HAVE DONE VERY WELL.

Our Matrons are not able to give a reference in the accepted sense of the term but as they all have a very long and intimate acquaintance with every form of destitution they are able to select those who are most suitable for the vacancies that occur.

The Committee desire to emphasise the point that no questions being asked the confidence of the women is invited, and those who are in mental or emotional distress feel that they will receive sympathy and assistance devoid of curiosity.



SOME OF THE GUESTS AT CECIL HOUSE, HARROW ROAD.

The work has been made easier by gifts of clothing, boots, etc., which have been sent to us for free distribution. Many young girls, quite inadequately clothed, have been given a complete outfit, and hundreds of women have found comfort and relief from the shoes and stockings, etc., Cecil Houses have thus been able to supply. The Committee have also been able to help unmarried mothers who have arrived quite friendless; arranging for their reception in maternity homes, infirmaries, etc., and later assisting them to place their children.

Cecil Houses have received assistance from all kinds and conditions of men and women. The Committee have had the help and approval of Her Majesty the Queen who most graciously presented a donation, with gifts of an arm-chair and umbrella-stand for Devonshire Street, two cots for Wharfedale Road, an over-mantel for Kensal Road and a clock for Harrow Road. Her Majesty visited Devonshire Street and expressed herself pleased and satisfied with all the arrangements.

At all the Houses there is an atmosphere of homeliness, and the spirit of friendliness between the Matron and lodgers and among the women themselves may be expressed by quoting from some of the weekly Reports sent in by Matrons :—

“Two young girls age 15 and 17 came from Leicester. I sent them to a Bureau in Kilburn and they got fixed up straight away. One Mistress has 'phoned me saying how pleased she was with her new maid, she was willing, obliging, so anxious to please.”

“Mrs. H. . . . one of the lodgers has had her bag stolen either in a bus or tea shop. She cannot get any money because her Savings Bank Book was in the bag. I have given her a bed each night and money from the Needy Fund for food.”

“Friday night one of the women was taken ill with Bronchial Pneumonia. The Doctor came on Saturday night and gave her an order right away for removal on Ambulance and both she and her baby were taken into Rackham Street Hospital.”

“Saturday evening I had a call from Vine Street Police station asking if I could help them out of a difficulty with a woman and baby who were in trouble and stranded through her husband being arrested for bigamy. They brought her along in their car and I am doing what I can for her for a few nights. The Police are seeing to her food.”

“Pleased to say have found a good cook-general for Mrs. S. . . . I find the younger, better class women anxious to get work are coming in. Four left this week for different parts of London to get settled.”

Each Christmas since the first House opened, the kindness and generosity of our friends has made it possible for all our lodgers to enjoy on this one day relief from the desperate anxiety of finding

food and a bed. A free breakfast, an ample Christmas dinner of beef, Christmas pudding, etc., tea and supper are served and a party of professionals give up their own Christmas afternoon to provide an entertainment. A free bed is also given and the following extract from the Matrons' Reports show how intensely this day of festification is appreciated :—

“The Christmas dinner was excellent and much enjoyed by the lodgers. They all say what a jolly Christmas they have had. One woman told me it was the best she had had since she was a child.

“The breakfast of ham made a good start, and the dinner allowed enough over for the women to have supper. They especially enjoyed the concert and said the singing was really beautiful. They all joined in the choruses.”

**Since Cecil Houses opened some 311,468 beds and 27,924 cots have been occupied.**

Many women—some of them with babies in their arms—have to be turned away from our Four Houses, owing to lack of accommodation, and the need for further provision is only too apparent.

The purchase price of the freehold, cost of constructing and equipping each House is raised by Public subscription. Once, however, a House is open it stands on its own financial feet, the monies paid by the women meeting the cost of upkeep, salaries of staff, provision of cleaning material, tea, biscuits, electric light, rates, etc., with allowance for depreciation.

But when Five Houses are firmly established the Committee do not mean to pause in their endeavours. They aim at a minimum of Six Houses in Central London, when the work will start in the suburbs and subsequently in the provinces. The necessity for accommodation for homeless women who through no fault of their own are without permanent shelter, grows apace.

The Committee are glad to be able to state that since Cecil Houses set the example other lodging houses have opened their doors to babies, and arranged special accommodation for them. For this reason it will not be necessary to have such a large number of cots in the Fifth House though several will be kept in case of need.

Enquiries 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.

Interest in the work is steadily growing and during the past year many 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, collecting boxes and cards to those who are good enough to help. Application for speakers should be made to the Office, 11, Golden Square, London, W. 1.

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.**

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

The Committee desire to acknowledge, most whole-heartedly, the general sympathy and encouragement they have received since starting an undertaking which, though full of human interest, is necessarily accompanied by considerable anxiety. That they have accomplished a part at least of what they set out to do has been made possible only by the ready response that has attended every effort, both from the Press and from the Public, without whose co-operation but little could have been done.

*December 31st, 1932.*

*The following are Extracts from the  
Speeches of our Supporters.*

---

*At the Cambridge Theatre, November 18th, 1932.*

“BEFORE YOU GO TO SLEEP . . . . GIVE  
THANKS!”

I can assure you, as a Member of Parliament, it is rather an anxious position for me to be in the Chair at this kind of meeting. Generally what happens when you are busily engaged earning your £400 a year, if you have to go to a meeting, is that the Chairman introduces you, and then you have to make a speech of a highly controversial nature.

This afternoon I am in a more fortunate position, because I have a very good team of speakers around me, and I know that whatever form my speech takes, there is certainly no question of controversy about the work we have come to support to-day, work associated with the name of Mrs. Cecil Chesterton. As you know, the movement which we are endeavouring to help to-day started in 1926, when Mrs. Chesterton set out to discover what the truth was about the position as regards the women and young persons who were homeless and had nowhere to turn for help. As a result we have now established four Cecil Houses. I will read to you the dates on which they were opened.

The first was opened at 35, Devonshire Street, on 28th March, 1927. The second, in Wharfedale Road, on 18th January, 1928; on March 18th, 1929, the third house, at 194, Kensal Road, and in November, 1930, the fourth house, at 179, Harrow Road, W. 2. Those four houses on an average each accommodate about fifty-five women, and there is also accommodation for babies. The last house was opened in 1930, just two years ago practically from the date we are here to-day. I think it is up to all of us to see that the fifth house is opened, and because of that we have come here to-day. I am so glad to see you are here in such numbers.

Now I dare say many of you see in the Press, and you hear, that London is not suffering so much as other parts of the country in the present industrial depression. It may be so. It may also be true that there is a tendency to move South. We know the



WAITING FOR ADMISSION TO CECIL HOUSE.  
(Reproduced by permission of "Woman's Own")

whole face of Southern England round London has been changing very much in recent years. Consider what that means for the people who come up to London from other areas—from Lancashire, and Yorkshire! They come to seek their living. What do they find? They find that the streets of London are not paved with gold. Very likely they find London is a stony-hearted step-mother.

Other speakers will tell you about the rules and regulations of Cecil Houses. Fortunately, there is one excellent rule, that there are no questions asked. The movement is non-sectarian, non-denominational. The only thing necessary if a person wants to get into Cecil House is that they come and ask for admission and pay the sum of one shilling, for which they get not only a night's lodging, but they can wash their clothes, and they get tea and biscuits at night, and tea and bread and butter in the morning, and an opportunity of a hot bath. There is no question asked how they got the shilling, no prying into their private lives, and I do really think, after a long experience of local administration, that the Cecil Houses are a most excellent movement.

Ladies and Gentlemen, I expect many of you are like myself. We are proud of the fact that this London is the greatest city the world has seen. We should like to see provision made for all the homeless women and children.

Now we are gathered here this afternoon. There is no question of controversy likely to arise in the course of our proceedings, but I hope there will be a spirit of friendly rivalry among you all to see how much you can give.

When you go home to-night to your comfortable homes, and when you go to bed, before you go to sleep may I hope you will be able to give thanks that you have done something towards making life a little easier for some of those who are not so fortunately placed as some of us.

We have a lot of distinguished speakers. There is one alteration in the programme. Mr. Godfrey Tearle cannot be present this afternoon, so Mr. Ernest Milton has come to speak in his place.

*Adrian Moreing, M.P.*

### “ONCE SHE WAS LOVELY, EVEN SHE . . . .”

In opening the list of the sequence of speakers, I find it just a little painfully difficult that it is the writing ladies and literary gentlemen who are requested to precede the actors and the politicians. Diffident as I am about my own efforts, none the less, speaking for my profession, I have infinite confidence in the Green Apple Harvest of the eloquence of Miss Sheila Kaye-Smith, and I

know Mr. Priestley will speak with the tongue of angels and Oakroyds. I know, however, that Wordsworth, if he were living to-day, would not have penned the sonnet:—

“Milton, thou shouldst be living at his hour” (turning to Mr. Ernest Milton).

I want to say that I am going to confine myself to one aspect of the loveliness of Cecil Houses as on one or two occasions it has been presented to me. Very lately—indeed only a few nights ago—I was taken around from hostel to hostel by that indefatigable member of Committee, Mrs. Denston Fennelle. There was one particular element which appealed to me more than I can say. There were girls there, there were babies harboured there. One dear woman had three babies, and I could not help asking the matron whether there was any reduction for quantity! But it was the old women, the homeless old women, who most particularly appealed to me. I have always had an extraordinary affection and affinity for some queer psychic reason, which Freud would tie up with all sorts of obscure sub-conscious tendencies, for old women. Did I warn you I should quote poems at you? This, at all events, is what I feel about old women, in verse:—

“Now girls are neither here nor there,  
Old men are neither less nor more,  
Women are faithless to the core,  
And men are but a grinning snare.  
But in old women you will find  
Friends according to God’s mind.”

And to find in the Cecil House shelter and harbourage for old women was a realisation of the utmost poignancy to me.

I remember on one occasion when I was wandering in the Beguinage in Bruges, and how in that small green island of tranquillity, hidden from the tumultuous world beyond it, the old women seemed withdrawn in their own contemplation. I found the same sort of peace, despite the fact that the young girls were dancing to the gramophone, among the old women gathered together in a Cecil House near Theobald’s Road.

I remember an occasion in Edinburgh, facing the castle outlined against the burning rivers of the sunset, when an old lady of what was once called the quality, and another of what was once called the people, sat together in that dusking room. Others there were, young people, talking merrily or angrily with each other. The old ladies talked in a subtler language, evoking a spiritual communion, and I saw precisely the same exquisite and delicate relationship between the old ladies in the Cecil Houses. A small old lady carrying with her some faded glory of the past and an even smaller old lady who spends her days charing sat together, and then they took out from their little bags one a sausage roll and the other a rice bun cake, or a rice cake bun, and that delicious

pair each divided her contribution; and then for the first time I realised the full meaning, as Mrs. Chesterton realised so long before me—I realised the full meaning of Edward Blunden’s line:—“all things they have in common, being so poor.”

I want to recall one more old woman. It was in Genoa at three or four o’clock one early summer morning. I could not sleep, and I went out into the byways of the older part of the town, and there on the top of a sarcophagus which once held the bones of some proud Renaissance beauty—I saw an old lady lying there, cold, still and statuesque. There in Genoa she was wrapped round in the same sort of covering as the old ladies who are not yet aware of the Cecil Houses would wrap themselves in on the Embankment, she was wrapped round in newspapers, and as I looked at her in all her grave immemorial beauty, again I was compelled, to your ultimate distress, to verse:

Once she was lovely. You have seen  
Birches when the wind was in them?  
And you knew not they were trees  
Or things holier than these.  
You have heard from over the dells  
Bells, or a faint sprite of bells,  
Making discord all sound else?  
There were flowers about, you said,  
But there were no flowers to see.  
Was it a thought of them that went  
Through the lands where they had been  
And the thought was more than scent?

Once she was lovely, even she  
She was a queen of knightly men.  
All her beauty is a ghost.

Once she was lovely, even she.  
She is lovelier now than then.

It was hardly a surprise that when I picked up an evening newspaper that day I learned of the death of that old woman on the sarcophagus. And I think now as I recall that old lady, whose sisters I saw in the Harrow Road, that if there had been some devoted genius like Mrs. Cecil Chesterton to establish a Cecil House in Genoa, that old lady would still be alive.

Ladies and Gentlemen, and you, Mr. Chairman, I know you are all novelists. England consists of about forty millions of people, mostly novelists, and I here recommend to you most urgently, do not confine yourselves entirely to the rectory tea-table or to the coal-mine or the draper’s counter. Make an adventure into the lodging houses that Mrs. Cecil Chesterton has so beneficently established, and for which she now appeals to your good nature to help to establish a fifth. Go and meet my friend, Miss Cookham, of Theobald’s Road. She sells matches by day and by



night she is scheming how she is going to re-establish herself in the possession of the Cookham millions. And when she gets the Cookham millions she is going to give the matron a whole bottle of port, and I am going to have two glasses. And then there is Mrs. Murphy, of the King's Cross Cecil House. She used, in the old, bad, pre-Chesterton days to get a bed for 1/5d. a night on bare boards, "without never a cup of tea," and in those days she got into trouble, she got drunk, and from time to time they had to put her behind barred doors. But now she is "the lady of my delight, a shepherdess of sheep," and though theologically I was just a little awed, I kissed her rosary as she handed it over to me. The theological equilibrium was shortly established when a lady named Miss Ginsberg, in another lodging house, after informing me she was a sales lady, requested me to kiss the little Shield of David which she carried in what she still calls a chatelaine. I felt that night I had received unction from both sides of Magnolia Street. I felt that the miseries of Magnolia Street would have been much less miserable and the joys more joyous, if Mrs. Cecil Chesterton had established her fifth house next door to Mrs. Poyser's grocery shop.

*Louis Golding.*

#### "IF ONE HAD NO HOME . . . ."

I do not know of a cause I have dearer to me than the one I am pleading this afternoon. I think it is largely a psychological matter, because personally I cannot think of a greater earthly woe than to be without a home, without a night's lodging. One can somehow endure anything if one thinks that at the end of the long, long trail, one is going home to a good supper, a comfortable bed and a warm fire, then one knows by the next morning one will have forgotten all about one's troubles, and be ready to start out afresh; but what would it be if one had no home, no fire, no bed, nowhere to rest except some seat on the Embankment, or a corner in the hedge, some archway, if one had absolutely no chance of recuperating oneself for the next day's struggle.

I think that that is peculiar to women. It is a characteristic of all women, more than men, that they must have something they can call their home. A man will spend several days in succession sleeping under hedges, out of doors. I don't say he enjoys it and I certainly don't say he ought to, but I do know men who will do it from choice, but I think there is something in feminine human nature that makes a home, or something they can call a home, essential to them, and that is why it seems such a dreadful thing that the provision for homeless women in London is so much less than the provision for homeless men, that women cannot always find a lodging, and until Mrs. Chesterton established her houses, there were many more homeless women than there are now.

My feelings were aroused when I read Mrs. Chesterton's wonderful book about her experiences in London, when she went out, leaving her comfortable home, and faced life as a homeless woman, just to take the same chance as the matchseller or wanderer in the streets. My first feelings were of profound admiration for her, and my next of indignation at the conditions she disclosed, the lack of accommodation for women with no choice between the streets and the cold and inhospitable workhouse, whereas there were an adequate number of houses for men. I do not call myself a feminist, but I must say my blood boiled at that, and I am so thankful to know that, thanks to her activity and her devotion, there has been this number of houses established in London, and I hope there will be many, many more, because so often the women in the streets have actually the price of a night's lodging. They can pay for it, but there simply is not the accommodation. When there is a sufficient number of Cecil Houses, no woman who is able to earn a shilling need sleep out. She will have her cup of tea and biscuits morning and night, a hot bath, a comfortable bed. She will have accommodation for her children, facilities for washing her clothes, and no questions asked. That is so important. It is terrible to have to go into a place and fill in forms. It seems a disgrace that that should be the rule rather than the exception. I am so glad there are no questions asked in Mrs. Chesterton's houses.

If the women want to find friends, they can. They can obtain, if they want, second-hand clothes, and respectable clothes may make all the difference in finding a job or not finding one; because very few women are worthless. They want jobs, they want homes, and these Cecil Houses enable them to find both; in giving them hospitality for the night they enable them to put themselves into a position to seek for work, when such hospitality will no longer be necessary for them.

I think the existence of such houses, besides being of benefit to the homeless women, is a great help to us. How often, walking in the street, we see these women, and wish we could do something, and although we may give money or buy a box of matches, we wonder if we are really doing any good. Now every time we give a woman a shilling, we know we are putting the woman into the position of being able to go to one of the Cecil Houses. It is not only that she will have accommodation for the night, but when she is there she will find friends.

This summer, when I was in Scotland, I was walking past a country police station, when I was arrested by a photograph of a woman, a most remarkable photograph. The eyes were closed, and the hair was falling round the face. She wore a wonderful air of beauty and serenity. It was so remarkable that I looked at it twice, and then saw the notice that she had been found drowned, she had been taken out of the Clyde near Glasgow, and the police

were searching for her relations. Somebody had spoken to her in a tram between Glasgow and the suburb where she had been found, and to this person she had unburdened herself. She had no work, and she had had to leave her lodgings because she was unable to pay the rent. She had lived in St. George's Square—St. George's Square is a place in Glasgow equivalent to our Thames Embankment where the homeless go—and this woman had lived in St. George's Square for a fortnight, and at the end of that time she had felt that she could stand it no longer, and had thrown herself into the Clyde.

And when I looked at this woman's face in the photograph, so happy, so triumphant at last, my blood boiled, and I felt perfectly sick to think I was so comfortable, whereas these tragedies were going on all round me. That this dreadful thing had been done and there was nothing I could do to help. And then suddenly I remembered I had agreed to speak at Mrs. Cecil Chesterton's meeting this afternoon, and I thought, "Well, thank heaven there is something I can do. If only I can bring before other people the need for these houses and the fact that by the mere provision of these homes we will save women from misery and suicide," and I thanked heaven I was coming here this afternoon and I do hope that, thanks to this meeting, we are going to open another house and make more accommodation for women, and perhaps will be able to open houses in other big cities, so that there will be nowhere in London where a homeless woman cannot find a bed, a fire, a cup of tea, and human kindness.

*Sheila Kaye-Smith.*

### "WISTFUL CREATURES OF THE NIGHT"

Last night I had a most strange, exciting and disturbing adventure. Mrs. Chesterton gave me the opportunity of seeing two of the Cecil Houses. When she asked me to speak this afternoon she suggested that perhaps I might like to see them. Frankly, the prospect filled me with terror. I felt I should be self-conscious. I should probably be brought face to face with such embarrassingly abject pictures of human misery that I should be almost ashamed to be seen merely as a spectator, but it was amazingly to the contrary.

The night was bitter, and on our way I had ample time to reflect on how dreadful it would be if one were compelled to spend the night in the streets, penniless and roofless. What particularly struck me in the Cecil Houses was the extraordinary brightness. There was none of the Dostoevsky atmosphere which I expected. Here were no grim Russian dramas, no tragedy of a really rather friendless place, but here was a house, very clean, very practical, with all the accommodation which has already been described to

you, and painted in bright colours—no garish colours which hurt the eye and made more disruption, but there was a splendid virile orange colour that made people feel that they were alive. There was also a highly social—I won't say convivial atmosphere—but an atmosphere of great friendliness and confidence on the part of the inmates of the house. The first house we visited was the one in Wharfdale Road, King's Cross. What amazed me—what particularly dispelled any preconceived idea of depression I may have obtained—was the great sense of self-respect that was to be found there. I found that this was fostered by all the surrounding conditions, not only the conditions of well-being, cleanliness, of food and light, and human society, but in the whole manner of the organisation of the place. The attitude of the matron was not the attitude of a keeper. It was not the attitude of a gaoler or a moralist, but rather of the rather pleasant buxom hostess of a very solid provincial hotel. I noticed Mrs. Chesterton's own technique as the real guardian angel of the whole enterprise. Her entrance was greeted with a real manifestation of joy. There was hardly a woman who was not eager to make herself recognised. Mrs. Chesterton did not turn on any style or stage technique. She simply came in as a woman friend, and said "Good evening, ladies."

We then went to the Cecil House in Harrow Road. There the class of women seemed to me a little more, shall I say a little happier, because some of them were women who had education and had striven to do something with themselves in the world, but through either force of circumstances or some defect of personality, had not been able to wrest a livelihood out of this place we live in. There the walls were painted a blue and orange. I saw also, as though to meet the slightly higher intellectual requirements of the women there, a slightly, not so much better tone of decoration, but more imaginative decoration, which probably arose out of the conditions. I rather gathered from this that these Cecil Houses, while maintaining a very uniform and level standard of supplying creature comforts, will, in some subtle way, through the genius of Mrs. Chesterton, adapt themselves to the major requirements of the women who frequent the districts where these houses are.

It was wonderful to see and to learn that hitherto lonely, isolated souls not only had the comfort of coming in out of the horrible friendless night, but of making friends, of making friendships that developed into lifelong contact—friendships that were eternally beneficial to both sides. The whole thing has a spirit of reconstructiveness that gives us hope for almost every department of life that we can think of.

It must be an amazing thing for any human being to have restored to them some measure of individuality, not to be just wistful creatures of the night, but to go back again into the field of

humanity, to become again living, conscious human entities. Everyone must have that. These Cecil Houses are bringing this. You, I know, will help this work to continue and prosper.

*Ernest Milton.*

### “WHAT ARE YOU GOING TO DO?”

Mrs. Chesterton is one of London's most forcible characters, a fact for which a great many women of this city have to be thankful. Of the best charities, this is the very first. We live in an age when people seem to expect some very prominent authority to do something, and ask one another:—“Why don't they do it?” I am sure that tendency is increasing. But this charity is doing something, and it is really a work of creation of one person, and that person is Mrs. Chesterton herself. It begins not in a mere benevolence, but in an actual experience, and the result is what is what we know to-day as Cecil Houses.

This problem of the homeless has unfortunately increased, and as I look round on this theatre, holding a vast number of people I wonder how homelessness would affect each one of you personally. There are hundreds of you here—nearly all feminine. Some of you have husbands, some of you have lost your husbands but I want you to imagine that two hundred of you are completely homeless and penniless—you have been stripped of home, money, security at this moment. And what are you going to do about it? If you have got a shilling in your pocket you will think you may be all right when you leave this theatre. It won't be so bad walking about for an hour or two. But it will get worse later on. It is getting colder and colder and foggier and foggier and you are going to be awfully tired with walking about.

What are you going to do, you two hundred? You may think you will go to a Cecil House. But you cannot, because there will not be room for you. If the appeal this afternoon succeeds there will be room for you, and for many, many more, in this town and in other towns. If you give generously there will be more houses and then you will get warm beds and also the famous cup of tea of which, at this very moment, we all stand in such need!

*J. B. Priestley.*

## WOMEN WHO HAVE NO HOME.

BY

JOAN WESTON EDWARDS.

Homeless women are on the increase!

And many of them are middle-class women. If you arrived in London penniless or with only a shilling or two which you are afraid to spend, what would you do?

If it were late at night you would find all the free beds at the shelters—tickets for which are given out at an office under Hungerford Bridge—were gone. You would have to ask a policeman to send you to the only woman's casual ward in London, at Southwark. He would give you a red ticket which would entitle you to ride in a tram. On arrival you would have to answer a number of questions by the porter. Then you would have to answer the same, and many more, inside.

Finally you would be escorted to a bathroom and given a clean, coarse, calico nightdress. You would have to take the bath, but it is clean and hot. Your clothes would be taken away for a baking “just in case.” Your bed would be sheetless and hard, but clean and safe! In the morning you would go to the common room and get tea and bread and margarine.

Unless you could satisfy the superintendent that you had work waiting, or a reasonable prospect of work, you would have to stay and work for your keep that day and the next night.

“Since I created such a hullabaloo about London's treatment of homeless women,” Mrs. Cecil Chesterton told me, “things have improved, even in the workhouse. The morning tea is hot, even though it is not fresh; the women are allowed to wash their clothes and mend them, which they could not do when I spent a night there.

“But the four Cecil Houses that sprang from my book (and there will be a fifth quite soon) are still the only lodgings for homeless women where the vagrant woman is asked no questions at all and her confidences are respected. She pays her shilling, which entitles her to a hot bath, hot water to wash her clothes, a comfortable room in which to mend them, a clean, if not luxurious bed, and tea bread and butter or biscuits in the morning.

“And we take in children.

“Of course, this is sometimes difficult. The other day a man and woman arrived in great distress. They had come to London because the man had found work, but the landlady he had chosen

would not take the woman in because there were too many children. They could not afford even the cheapest lodging so they came to us. And the eldest boy was eleven! If we had taken him in we might have lost our licence, for boys over ten are not allowed in a woman's lodging house.

"As a matter of fact, unless they are over eighteen they are not admitted into a man's lodging house, except of the very lowest kind.

"However, one of our women heard of our difficulty. She had a friend round the corner who squeezed the boy into bed with three of her own.

"Recently we have had several elderly nurses at the various houses. Nurses are doing badly now that so many people avoid employing them until they are at death's door. They often have to take cases at two guineas a week and may be 'out' for several weeks in between. A place where they can get a warm and comfortable bed and a really hot bath is a boon to them, for they cannot always stay with friends.

"Other superior women come to us. Sometimes they are with us for only a night; some stay as long as we can allow. Of course, they can only come in at eight at night and leave by ten in the morning. We can only just make the houses pay their expenses, when once bought and furnished, by shutting during the day. To keep open would mean double staff.

"One such woman asked if we could get her work. We telephoned to the Paddington catering people, who are always very kind to us. They said they had some scrubbing. The woman had been manageress in an hotel, had rheumatic fever, and gradually spent all her savings. She took the scrubbing thankfully, but was soon given something better. She is now assistant manager at a staff refreshment room.

"How kind the poor are to each other! Do you know that an elderly porter at King's Cross walks half a mile out of his way home every night to bring a packet of sandwiches he collects from his mates, so that some of our women can have a meat meal before leaving in the morning?

"The other night a policeman rang us up to ask if we could take in a woman and child. The only vacant bed was at Harrow Road. The buses had stopped running. So the sergeant and the policeman paid the woman's taxi fare. It was nearly five shillings.

"You see rents to-day are simply impossible for the very poor, who live from hand to mouth.

"Sometimes we get romance. One night a boy about 17 and a girl of the same age rang the bell. He said, diffidently, would we

look after his wife? We found that he was a public school boy. They had married secretly and she was out of work. Such children—and so devoted!

"What do lodging house women do all day? Some of them have work, of course; some sell matches, buttons, white heather, to eke out an old age pension.

"The women with children are the worst problem. 'If I had a vote,' one girl said the other day, 'I would give it to the man who made a law that landladies could not refuse to take in a woman with children.'

"Not long ago we took in a woman at our Kensal Road House for a fortnight. She had two small children. Every morning she got up and wheeled the babies down to the East End, where she had work, put them in a creche, and brought them back at night—7 miles!"

You see, in the eyes of the law to be homeless is almost a crime. That is why people will starve to keep their one room! And to have to turn away a woman who only asks the right to pay 1/- for shelter and comfort for the night is heartbreaking.

Men have enormous L.C.C. shelters where they can get a bed for 9d. There is nothing of the sort for women.

An out-of-work woman will walk about the streets or parks all day, spend hours in public libraries, and go without food in order to make sure of a bed at night without the taint of pauperism or beggarhood!

Wouldn't you?

*(Reprinted by permission of "Woman's Own.")*

## NO QUESTIONS ASKED!

BY

BARBARA MILLER.

The coffee had arrived when one of the guests at the jolly little dinner party in the Fleet Street flat remarked heatedly that these match-sellers were getting to be a terrific nuisance.

But the hostess, far from graciously complying with the bitter accusation of her guest, declared that she for one was thoroughly convinced that no woman would be on the street selling matches that night (it was February and sleeting) unless driven to it by sheer necessity.

In fact she had that moment decided to verify her statement—first hand. And she did.

The result was "In Darkest London", the book which followed the series of newspaper articles on the subject of lodgings for women in London. And the writer was Mrs. Cecil Chesterton, sister-in-law of Mr. G. K. Chesterton, who has been in Shanghai for a short time before leaving for a trip up the Yangtze.

A second result—and one with far-reaching effects—was the establishment of a chain of lodging houses for women, known as Cecil Houses Inc. Four are in operation, a new one each year since Mrs. Chesterton set out to learn the real story of the old match seller on the corner, with the exception of the period of the depression.

And the basic principle of the houses is "No questions asked." A woman in need of shelter for the night is admitted, pays her fee, (1/-, incidentally, though if she has no money she is not turned away) and becomes a member of the "club."

No questions asked! The very words are a refutation of that time-honoured accusation that women can't "get along" with one another because of their inordinate curiosity. Get along! Quite the reverse, but listen to Mrs. Chesterton's story.

It was on an afternoon in February, 1926, that she set out for adventure, wearing a shabby dress, a battered hat and a raincoat that may or may not have seen better days. Her shoes, however, were sound—cheap but strong—since a pneumonia siege was not included in her calculations. She had no money, not a penny.

Mingling with the crowds in the station, she finally singled out a likely looking policeman and explained: "I've lost my bag. I don't know what to do."

"What can you do?" that gentleman enquired with the scepticism born of long experience with unemployed ladies.

"I can cook," replied the future match seller, sturdily. That of course, was one of the better answers since the affinity between policemen and cooks is well-known. So he suggested the nearest Salvation Army Home—it wasn't very near but rain had started in earnest and Mrs. Chesterton's empty purse seemed emptier than it had a few hours earlier.

So she walked to the Home, several miles through the dark, and was given a bed.

Months later, when the articles on her experiences had appeared, she returned to that very Home and found that, opposite her name in their register had been written "We don't believe her story (she had explained that she had been in service and lost her job) but she hasn't been in prison and she doesn't drink."

The next morning she joined the line at a Labour Exchange and was rewarded with the opportunity of doing char duty in a private flat. It wasn't a happy experience, since the lady of the menage watched her every minute and failed even to provide tea. But with the money Mrs. Chesterton bought several boxes of matches—and the real experiment was on.

Night after night—Mrs. Chesterton actually disappeared for a fortnight, without even one reappearance for what comfortably is known as a "good night's rest" at her flat—she slept in dubious lodging houses, crowded, filthy, noisy. And night after night she realised more fully the lot of thousands of women in London to-day.

But they were kind to her, these women—casual workers, sellers of papers and matches and flowers, wandering chars, domestics and the most forlorn of derelicts, the women who have known "better days." Nor were the men less helpful.

One particularly dreadful morning Mrs. Chesterton had taken up her stand on the pavement, frost-bitten fingers clutching the precious boxes (only a few, since experience had shown that potential customers were frightened by a huge stock), with tears running down her cheeks. Frosted fingers and toes, sleepless nights and the bitter cold were responsible. She admits she was crying—couldn't help it.

Along came a husky young workman, apparently impervious to the majority of mankind's ills. He actually seemed to enjoy the cold.

"What's the matter, mate?" he inquired solicitously. Without waiting for a reply, he tactfully suggested, "What you need is a good cup of coffee." And it was—exactly.

But finally the fortnight was over and the articles published. Cheques began coming in—from all parts of the world, from men and women who wished to do their bit in providing at least temporary homes for the homeless of whom Mrs. Chesterton had written.

To-day four such houses are answering this very real need. In the fourth annual report of the Committee in charge, of which Lady Lovat is Chairman, the telling statement is made that, of London's public lodging house accommodation, eighty-four per cent. is available for men and only sixteen per cent. for women. After the initial expenditure each House is self-supporting. If a woman has no money, not even the shilling asked, the fee is paid from the "Needy Fund."

Funds have been raised for the Houses at public Meetings held at various London theatres, with such speakers as Mr. G. Bernard Shaw, Mr. G. K. Chesterton, Mr. John Galsworthy, Mr. Hugh Walpole and Miss Clemence Dane.

The latter, for example, said, in her address, "I Went There Myself" :—

"I got to King's Cross about half-past nine, and felt rather bad about taking somebody else's bed, for it was a bitter night; so I was careful to ask if there were any to spare, and it turned out that two or three were free. So I felt that I was not robbing anyone. The only question asked there was my name, and I gave my own, Ashton.

"Having paid my shilling, I went through a little hall into a big, long, comfortable room. There was a crowd of people gathered round the fire. They belonged to the poorer classes, but were clean, neatly dressed, respectable and quiet-spoken. I liked them.

"I sat watching and listening for about two hours . . . then somebody brought me a cup of hot tea, after which I went upstairs to my dormitory. There were three rooms leading out of each other, nice, big, airy rooms with tall windows at either end. There were about ten beds in a room. I was in the inside room. There were eleven beds in it. Two or three people were already in bed and asleep, and one nice old lady was sitting on her bed brushing out the loveliest silver hair that came down to her knees. I found that she knew my part of the world. She said she used to work there. She had had to work eighteen hours a day, but now she was old and could not work more than two hours on end without sitting down for a rest, so she had to leave and come to London to look out for an easier job, but was hoping to get away again by Christmas. She would not stay in London a minute longer than she had to.

"And indeed it was strange the way she, and later some of the other women, spoke of London, always in the same tone and always as if they hated it. They talked of London as of someone real who had been cruel to them."

The pictures of Cecil Houses are as varied as the personalities responsible for their transfer to the verbal canvas, yet sincere, intelligent admiration is obvious in every case. . . .

(Reprinted from "The North China Sunday News.")

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## "THE LEGION OF WOMEN"

BY

### THE EDITOR OF THE "SUNDAY CHRONICLE"

I believe that more of us than one would sometimes think must know what it is to arrive in a city with no money, or with very little—certainly not enough to warrant spending the night in an hotel where at the least bed and breakfast would cost five shillings. For men there has always been some place where for about a shilling they could be housed, warmed and fed until the day came round again; but for women until the Cecil Houses opened there was scarcely anywhere. There were institutions for the truly destitute, there were refuges for the sick and for the fallen, but for the ordinary woman working her difficult way in the world, living from hand to mouth and only just managing to hold her own, there were few human establishments. You may find that rather difficult to believe. The need for such places must seem so obvious that you are inclined to take for granted their existence in adequate numbers in our highly civilised state, with organised social services.

By one of those inexplicable accidents of mind it occurred to Mrs. Chesterton to doubt whether there was really a supply to meet this vital demand. She found there wasn't. She set about there and then to bring this thing to pass; she opened one house, then another, and then two more and now the latest Cecil House is in the process of being built. The fifth Cecil House! A fifth sanctuary for the foot-sore and weary women whose earning capacity is small but whose will to retain their precious independence is a force to be reckoned with.

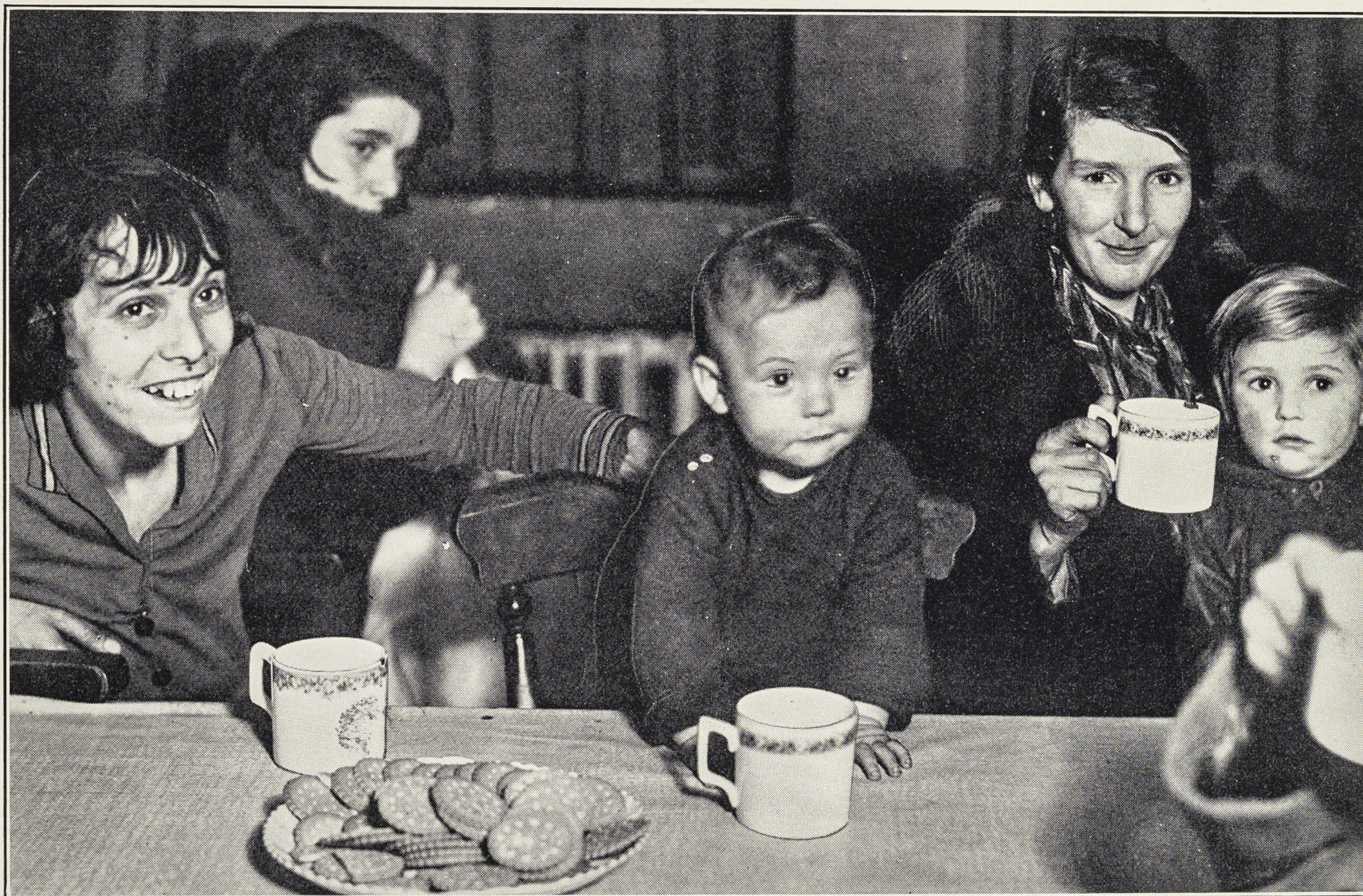
Those responsible for Cecil Houses lighted upon an aspect of modern life which had so far been overlooked. The independent spirit in womanhood had been attributed only to those who were

competing successfully with men in business, to the dashing and young with their latch-keys, to the bachelor women with their own flats. But what of the unsuccessful ones? Bad luck and ill-health and persistent failure does not break their spirit. They go on their way, and if they can earn one shilling a day the Cecil Houses have made it possible for them to retain their independence. To me that is a marvellous thing.

I remember a year or so ago seeing a film of the Foreign Legion. In the Foreign Legion, as you know, it is an unwritten law that no questions are asked. When the legionaire hero of this film asks the girl something about herself she reminds him of this rule amongst men and says, "There's a foreign legion of women, too. But they have no uniform, no medals when they are brave, no wound-stripes when they are wounded." I thought of this when I looked round a roomful of these gallant undefeatable women. I thought to myself "there's a foreign legion of women, too." And here in Cecil Houses their secrets and their intimate private life are equally untouched. Their name is asked for—nothing more.

Think of some of the charity institutions you know. Think of the papers to be filled up, documents bristling with questions and making certain that nothing in their lives shall remain uncovered. Then consider the lovely courtesy of the rule of no questions.

Probably because of this there is an atmosphere of friendliness and camaraderie which is the happiest thing. There is a half-circle of women round a blazing fire in a gay room painted in orange and blue; as another enters the circle is widened and if her shoes are wet she goes nearest the fire. The firelight dances on blue and white tiles, a stout cheerful matron comes and goes, emanating the friendliness and humanity of a woman who can never be surprised or shocked any more at what life can do, and whose attitude now is simply "*tout savoir c'est tout comprendre.*"



"MORE PLEASE!"

*(Reproduced by permission of "Woman's Own")*



## FURTHER NOTICES FROM THE PRESS.

"If Charles Dickens returned to earth how he would revel in describing the work of Cecil Houses! Four years ago the First Cecil House was started by the initiative of Mrs. Cecil Chesterton to provide homeless or vagrant women with sleeping, bathing and washing accommodation at cost price. Since then the movement has grown until there are now four Houses in full operation. Satisfactory as this extension of the work is, much still remains to be done, and accordingly the freehold of a site for a fifth house has been acquired at the cost of £2,350. This purchase has eaten up all the available funds, and if the new house is to be open next winter a considerable sum will have to be raised to reconstruct and equip it to satisfy the L.C.C. regulations. In asking my readers to help in raising it, I can assure them that they could not give their money for a better purpose."—*Truth*, May 25th, 1932.

". . . Cecil Houses Inc. . . provide a very welcome reminder that in these days of inquisitorial State philanthropy a private work of goodwill can flourish and justify itself beyond all the dreams of officialdom. . ."—*G. K's Weekly*, June 4th, 1932.

"It is probable that most of us rarely ask ourselves the question: 'Where am I going to sleep to-night?' except when we have a pleasant sense of adventure on a holiday, but to a poor and homeless woman this can indeed be a terrible question. Fortunately, the provision made by Cecil Houses helps to solve the problem. . ."—*Nursing Mirror*, June 4th, 1932.

". . . Surely poverty of that extreme sort has no place now, we may think, but it does still exist. The Cecil Houses know all about that. A woman, for instance, comes in holding a small parcel; by mischance it falls and a few empty mustard tins roll out. She had nothing in the world, and the empty tins gave her a feeling of possession.

"At these Cecil Houses, by the way, the women are given something more than the barest necessities. Not much more, of course, but enough to make a considerable difference to the mental and psychological outlook of the visitors. During the past year a woman Doctor has visited each House every fortnight and given her invaluable advice to the lodgers—women, girls and young infants, entirely without fee. The kindness of manufacturers and wholesale druggists has supplied first aid necessities, simple remedies and nutritious patent foods which, given under the directions of the doctor, have proved of great value both to the mothers and their children."—*The News Chronicle*, June 16th, 1932.

"In a rather dingy Bloomsbury street the one note of cheerfulness is a Cecil House.

"It is in sharp contrast to the Old London lodging houses which were famous—or rather infamous. This is just one of a group of homely places which any homeless woman can make her home and 'no questions asked.' A good bed, a bath, and tea and biscuits night and morning, all for a shilling.

"Women who come to London to seek their fortune and miss the way, have Mrs. Cecil Chesterton to thank for this great service."—*Harrogate Advertiser*, November 11th, 1932.

"I shall not forget the look of delight which passed across the face of an old woman sleeping on a city doorstep one night when I handed her a shilling. 'Thank you,' she said, 'now I can go to the Hotel Cecil.'

"She was using the current down-and-out's slang for the Cecil Houses run by Mrs. Chesterton for homeless women."—*Yorkshire Observer, November 19th, 1932.*

"This afternoon, on one platform, I heard Mr. Louis Golding, Miss Sheila Kaye-Smith, Mr. J. B. Priestley and Mr. Ernest Milton speak for the Cecil Houses. Mrs. Cecil Chesterton's public service found adequate praise; 'house full' showed the wonderful interest in the movement, which provides lodging for homeless women in London. There are four of these houses in the West and North, and a fifth is opening soon in the South-East. The Bishop of Woolwich, the Thames Police Court Magistrate, and the Chief Rabbi are enthusiastic in support, and Miss Clemence Dane, who 'went there' herself, is right to emphasise how instead of talking here is a chance of doing something to remove the unfairness between one woman's lot and another's."—*Newcastle Chronicle, November 19th, 1932.*

"Fancy being stranded in London at any time of the year, without a home to go to, and especially in the winter months that are ahead of us! Yet that is the prospect before many poor women who could afford a shilling for a lodging, but cannot find one. Why should they go to the workhouse?

"A very small and quite insufficient accommodation for women is provided in the lodging houses licensed by the L.C.C., and so the Cecil Houses were started to supply at least some part of the deficiency."—*Kentish Mercury, November 25th, 1932.*

"When life is proving exceptionally difficult and we are tired and rather despondent, what a wonderful thing it is to know that at least we have a home to return to—however humble a place it may be. Unfortunately, however, the number of people to whom the word 'home' signifies nothing at all is daily growing bigger, and in these distressing times thousands are being cast adrift on the London streets. It is with great pleasure, therefore, that we hear that Mrs. Cecil Chesterton hopes shortly to be able to start another of her public lodging houses for homeless women in London."—*Nursing Mirror, November 26th, 1932.*

## PRESS NOTICES FROM ABROAD.

### AMERICA.

No questions asked. No inquiries made into past history. No advice given unless directly sought. These are the rules which govern the four Cecil Houses of London and will govern the fifth, when it is ready.

Any woman may get a bed at a Cecil House, "provided there is a bed vacant," and what is more, may take her children with her, so long as she has a shilling to pay for herself and an extra 3d. for each child. For that amount will be furnished when they arrive hot drinks and biscuits, baths, the use of a first-class laundry, beds, and the next morning more hot drinks and biscuits will be forthcoming.

But the snag in the affair lies in that sentence, "provided there is a bed vacant." All told, the four existing Cecil Houses can offer only 222 beds to women and 50 children's cots; and this is not nearly sufficient.

In London the need for cheap lodging for men is almost adequately met. Women, however—especially those with children—are not properly provided for. When Mrs. Cecil Chesterton first put forward the plan of opening houses for women, she spoke with authority because, in order to discover what the night conditions of London really were, she had left her home, dressed in an old mackintosh and, without a penny in her pocket, had gone out to see for herself. And what she saw convinced her that, without delay, something should be done.

She began to collect funds (it takes something like £6,000 to £7,000 to reconstruct and equip a Cecil House, and pay the freehold price) and was able to launch her first venture in March 1927, and to follow it in the three succeeding years with other houses in various parts of London.

This year there has been no Cecil House; but so great is the need that Mrs. Chesterton's executive committee has gone forward in the certainty that funds will be forthcoming, and has actually negotiated for the purchase of a building in South-East London, which will furnish another 60 beds.

There is nothing of the "institution" in the appearance of a Cecil House. Light walls, bright paint, cheerfully coloured window curtains, pots of flowers, scrupulous cleanliness obtain everywhere. The women who come to them (the doors open at 8 p.m.) are casual workers, vendors of papers, flowers or matches; itinerant charwomen, unemployed domestic servants and waitresses, together with a sprinkling of better class women who have fallen on evil times. Nobody asks their history.

Since the first house was opened, many hundreds of women have been supplied with work, and many more provided with clothing; with those little things, such as gloves, shoes, stockings, which make all the difference in the attitude with which a woman sets out to find a job. Others have been given complete outfits. In these years, 235,381 beds and 23,426 cots have been occupied.

After a Cecil House has been launched by public subscription, it is able to stand, financially, upon its own feet, since the shillings of those who come to it are found, by skilful management, to meet the demands of upkeep and running expenses, and even maintain a fund against general depreciation.—*Christian Science Monitor, Boston, Mass., January 4th, 1933.*

### CHRISTCHURCH, NEW ZEALAND.

Who is the bravest woman in London? Not a few will answer, "Mrs. Cecil Chesterton." Mrs. Chesterton, the widowed sister-in-law of G. K. Chesterton, made a journalist's mark with her book "In Darkest London." To write this book she divested herself of every feminine adjunct of civilisation, and garbed as an outcast sought work without reference or proof of evidence, purely on human need. Men have slept in shell-holes; this educated, professional woman ate, drank and sojourned with the utterly down-and-out women of the metropolis, sleeping in the awful shelters which alone were open to waifs like these. She braved these dangers to disprove the easy fallacy that "no woman wanting work need remain destitute" and to shock London into action on this failure of society to recognise its duty to the homeless.

The plain, unemotional newspaper tale has had its effect. What a famous man did many years ago to establish London lodging houses for homeless men has now been done in the more difficult case of female destitution by the founding of the Cecil Houses for Women, four modestly but comfortably equipped homes for the night, where the humblest trader or worker who can offer a shilling is given a clean, warm bed, a hot bath, an evening by a cosy fire, with gramophone, songs, and talk, tea and biscuits when she arrives and tea and bread and butter when she leaves in the morning. Some of the guests bring extra supplies of food, or cigarettes, both of which they are quick to share.

Good behaviour is expected, but no questions as to name, address, or occupation are asked. The houses are a home for the homeless, a hope and a promise which are eagerly grasped, not only by the improvident and the untrained, but by strangers, widows, old women, girls temporarily out of work, or women of a better class brought low by misfortune. Situated in mean but not slum streets, at King's Cross, Holborn, Harrow Road and Kensal Road, these houses entertain some two hundred paying guests nightly. They must apply before eight in the evening. The deepest need is met in the mothers' and babies' dormitory where, for an extra threepence, a cot is placed beside the mother's bed. The free bath is here, indeed, salvation; and the tiny guests, often pitifully underclad, are as often presented with warm garments out of the Wardrobe Room, which the promoters of the scheme keep supplied with used but useful clothes, both for babies and women. This help is invaluable for those looking for situations. For the ladies on the central Cecil Houses Committee, up to early this year, have already placed 700 women in employment.

Needless to say, these wise benefactors are busy raising funds for a fifth Cecil House. So well are they run that, although £7,000 is necessary to buy and equip a house, once it is going, it supports itself on the shillings paid for admission.—*"Atalanta" in THE PRESS, September 17th, 1932.*

#### AUCKLAND, NEW ZEALAND.

I am glad to hear that Mrs. Cecil Chesterton has succeeded in finding premises for the opening of a fifth Cecil House. Accommodation has been secured in the midst of a big slum area which lies between Waterloo Road and Westminster Bridge Road, and though the necessary funds have still to be secured for reconstruction and equipment in accordance with the L.C.C. regulations there is no doubt that the project will be carried through with success. The Cecil Houses do for women very much what the Rowton Homes do for men. But until Mrs. Chesterton came along no one had the courage to grapple with the problem of homeless women. No woman actually in need of a bed is ever turned away. If she has the money, a shilling a night is charged for a bed, hot bath (towel and soap included), all facilities for washing clothes, hot tea and biscuits at night, and tea and bread and butter in the morning. If she has no money at all the necessary shilling is taken from what is known as the "Needy Fund." No questions are asked of any applicant who books a bed. Her past history is not inquired into. It is sufficient that a bed is wanted.—*Star, July 30th, 1932.*

#### SOUTH AFRICA.

South Africans interested in social service should not overlook one of the cleanest, brightest bits of philanthropy in London, namely, Cecil Houses, the public lodging houses for women. Founded by the widow of Cecil Chesterton they are real living monuments to a brave, intrepid spirit.

Mrs. Cecil Chesterton, being who she is, commands the help of all the writers and actors in London, and to attend the annual meeting in a theatre is more interesting than most matinees. . . .

No work done by the charitable, the kindly and the generous is nearer the heart of the Queen than that which enables homeless women to enjoy the comforts, cleanliness, and warmth of a well equipped hostel. . . . She has always given approval and help to the Cecil Houses and has even contributed to the furnishing of these houses, for which Mrs. Chesterton works untiringly.—*South Africa, May 20th, 1932.*



"NO BED, NO HOME, NOWHERE TO REST . . . ."

LEAFLETS, SUBSCRIPTION FORMS, COLLECTING  
CARDS & 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.

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CECIL HOUSES (INCORPORATED).—Balance Sheet as at 31st December, 1932.

LIABILITIES.				ASSETS.			
	£	s.	d.		£	s.	d.
SUNDRY CREDITORS ... ..			278 3 9	CASH AT BANK:			
SPECIAL DONATION:				Deposit Account ... ..	4,000	0	0
As per contra ... ..	1,000	0	0	Current Account ... ..	2,352	1	7
SPECIFIC DONATIONS:							6,352 1 7
As per last Account ... ..	183	13	7	CASH IN HAND ... ..			31 0 0
Received during year ... ..	151	7	9	INVESTMENTS:			
	335	1	4	£1,550 War Loan 1929/47 at Cost	1,594	12	8
Less: Expenditure during year	141	14	2	£1,000 War Loan 1929/47 (Special			
			193 7 2	Donation as per contra) ...	1,000	0	0
INCOME AND EXPENDITURE ACCOUNT:							2,594 12 8
Balance, 1st January, 1932 ...	1,041	5	0	SUNDRY DEBTORS AND DEBIT BALANCES			63 0 0
Add: Excess of Income over				PROPERTY ACCOUNT, at Cost, less			
Expenditure for the year ended				Depreciation:			
31st December, 1932:				Devonshire Street ... ..	1,154	8	3
Devonshire Street ... ..	91	7	7	Wharfdale Road ... ..	1,830	10	4
Wharfdale Road ... ..	143	17	8	Kensal Road ... ..	2,378	7	3
Kensal Road ... ..	7	14	3	Harrow Road ... ..	4,252	10	0
Harrow Road ... ..	66	12	3		9,615	15	10
			1,350 16 9	Less: Depreciation—10% ...	961	11	7
CAPITAL ACCOUNT:					8,654	4	3
Balance as per last Account ...	15,684	16	0	Deposit on Waterloo Road ...	235	0	0
Add: Excess of Income over							8,889 4 3
Expenditure for the year ended				FURNITURE, FITTINGS AND EQUIPMENT:			
31st December, 1932:				As per last Account, at Cost, less			
Main Account ... ..	2,251	13	1	Depreciation ... ..	3,119	10	6
			17,936 9 1	Additions during year ... ..		4	14 7
					3,124	5	1
				Less: Depreciation—10% ...	312	8	6
				STOCK ACCOUNT:			2,811 16 7
				Books at Cost ... ..			17 1 8
							£20,758 16 9
							£20,758 16 9

TO THE MEMBERS OF CECIL HOUSES (INCORPORATED).

In accordance with the Companies Act, 1929 we have examined the above Balance Sheet dated 31st December, 1932, and Income and Expenditure Account for the year ended the same date, and have obtained all the information and explanations we have required.

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

56, MOORGATE, LONDON, E.C. 2.

HARMOOD BANNER & SON, Chartered Accountants.

CECIL HOUSES (INCORPORATED).

MAIN ACCOUNT.

Income and Expenditure Account, for the Year ended 31st December, 1932.

EXPENDITURE.				INCOME.			
	£	s.	d.		£	s.	d.
ADMINISTRATION EXPENSES:				Donations ... ..			3,362 9 9
Salaries and Insurance ... ..			581 18 0	Subscriptions ... ..			1,346 16 11
Printing and Stationery ... ..			93 14 2	Interest on Investments and Current Account			134 3 5
Travelling ... ..			10 19 5				
Postage, Telegrams & Telephone			67 7 10				
Fuel and Light ... ..			8 19 2				
Insurances ... ..			4 10 7				
Honorarium ... ..			50 0 0				
Sundries ... ..			24 19 6				
Cost of Meeting ... ..			77 11 0				
Rent, Rates and Cleaning—							
11, Golden Square ... ..			149 7 9				
Cost of Annual Report ... ..			193 5 6				
RECONSTRUCTION, REPAIRS AND							
RENOVATIONS:							
Kensal Road ... ..	27	10	0				
Harrow Road ... ..	27	14	0				
			55 4 0				
DEPRECIATION ACCOUNT:							
Amount written off Properties—							
10% ... ..			961 11 7				
Furniture, Fittings and Equip-							
ment ... ..			312 8 6				
BALANCE, being excess of Income							
over Expenditure for the year							
ended 31st December, 1932, trans-							
ferred to Balance Sheet ... ..			2,251 13 1				
			£4,843 10 1				£4,843 10 1

CECIL HOUSES (INCORPORATED).  
DEVONSHIRE STREET.

*Income and Expenditure Account, for the Year ended 31st December, 1932.*

	EXPENDITURE.		£ s. d.	£ s. d.			£ s. d.
	To Salaries and Insurance ...		336 6 1			By Revenue from Beds and Cots ...	799 19 9
	„ Printing and Stationery ...		16 8			„ Interest on Investments and Current	
	„ Postages ...		9 3			Account ...	22 9 4
	„ Telephone ...		10 16 6				
	„ Lighting ...		50 13 6				
	„ Insurances ...		9 5 3				
36	„ Soaps and Disinfectants ...		8 17 7				
	„ Sundries ...		29 4 3				
	„ Repairs and Replacements ...		111 16 5				
	„ Provisions for Women and						
	Babies ...		53 13 8				
	„ Laundry ...		39 5 3				
	„ Coal and Coke ...		29 12 4				
	„ Water Rate ...		11 1 9				
	„ Rates ...		39 3 0				
				731 1 6			
	„ Balance, being excess of Income over Ex-						
	penditure for the year ended 31st Decem-						
	ber, 1932, transferred to Balance Sheet ...			91 7 7			
				£822 9 1			£822 9 1

CECIL HOUSES (INCORPORATED).  
WHARFDALE ROAD.

*Income and Expenditure Account, for the Year ended 31st December, 1932.*

	EXPENDITURE.		£ s. d.	£ s. d.			£ s. d.
	To Salaries and Insurance ...		402 17 1			By Revenue from Beds and Cots ...	1,062 17 0
	„ Printing and Stationery ...		1 13 4			„ Interest on Investments and Current	
	„ Postages ...		12 4			Account ...	22 19 1
	„ Telephone ...		9 4 7				
	„ Insurances ...		18 18 10				
37	„ Rates ...		80 1 1				
	„ Laundry ...		68 9 3				
	„ Lighting ...		35 17 11				
	„ Coal and Coke ...		34 9 11				
	„ Soap and Disinfectants ...		14 13 3				
	„ Repairs and Replacements ...		181 19 0				
	„ Sundries ...		36 13 1				
	„ Provisions for Women and Babies		56 8 9				
				941 18 5			
	„ Balance, being excess of Income						
	over Expenditure for the year						
	ended 31st December, 1932,						
	transferred to Balance Sheet			143 17 8			
				£1,085 16 1			£1,085 16 1

CECIL HOUSES (INCORPORATED).  
KENSAL ROAD.

*Income and Expenditure Account, for the Year ended 31st December, 1932.*

EXPENDITURE.				INCOME.			
		£	s. d.	£	s. d.		
	To Salaries and Insurance	442	0			890	8
	„ Printing and Stationery	1	13			8	0
	„ Postages		12			1	2
	„ Rates	75	2				
	„ Telephone	14	7				
	„ Insurances	23	10				
38	„ Laundry	85	5				
	„ Lighting	74	4				
	„ Coal and Coke	38	13				
	„ Soap and Disinfectants	8	6				
	„ Repairs and Replacements	23	0				
	„ Sundries	39	6				
	„ Provisions for Women and Babies	57	12				
				883	16		
	„ Balance, being excess of Income over Expenditure for the year ended 31st December, 1932, transferred to Balance Sheet						
				7	14		
				£891	10		3

CECIL HOUSES (INCORPORATED).  
HARROW ROAD.

*Income and Expenditure Account, for the Year ended 31st December, 1932.*

EXPENDITURE.				INCOME.			
		£	s. d.	£	s. d.		
	To Salaries and Insurance	466	8			1,107	6
	„ Printing and Stationery	1	13			1,107	6
	„ Postages		10			1	9
	„ Telephone	15	10				
	„ Lighting	63	6				
	„ Soap and Disinfectants	13	3				
39	„ Sundries	47	1				
	„ Repairs and Replacements	53	12				
	„ Provisions for Women and Babies	63	1				
	„ Laundry	103	11				
	„ Coal and Coke	42	3				
	„ Rates	144	14				
	„ Insurances	27	7				
				1,042	3		
	„ Balance, being excess of Income over Expenditure for the year ended 31st December, 1932, transferred to Balance Sheet						
				66	12		
				£1,108	15		11

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

35 DEVONSHIRE STREET,  
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.

OR AT

11 GOLDEN SQUARE, W. 1.

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ANNUAL SUBSCRIPTIONS AND DONATIONS  
SHOULD BE MADE PAYABLE TO THE HON.  
TREASURER, MAJOR J. BRUNEL COHEN, J.P.,  
AT THE OFFICES OF THE FUND,  
11 GOLDEN SQUARE, W. 1.

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OBTAINED (PRICE 2/6, POSTAGE 5d.)  
FROM THE OFFICES OF THE FUND.



