

VICAR AS "TRAMP."

VISIT TO A PRESTON SHELTER.

MAYOR'S REPLY TO CRITICISMS IN A PAMPHLET.

STEPS TAKEN BY THE COMMITTEE

The annual meeting of subscribers and supporters of the Shepherd-street Mission, Preston, was held at the Guild Hall, Preston, this afternoon. The Mayor (Alderman W. M. Margerison) presided, and was supported by Sir John Kirk (chairman of the Ragged School Union), Major Stanley, M.P., Mr. George Toulmin, M.P., Mr. W. Parker, and others.

The Mayor submitted the 34th annual report dealing with the various operations of the mission. "The past year," the report opened, "has not been one of the most pleasant for the Shepherd-street Mission, many things having taken place to cause worry and discouragement. With the various branches of the mission, and a family of nearly 50, the work is very difficult within the fold; but when the mission is attacked in a most shameful way from without by such men as the Vicar of Crossens, the Rev G Z Edwards, and the most abominable untruths written and published, it is enough to make anyone hang their harps on the willows, and it is hard work at times to believe that 'All things work together for good to them that love God.'

The Mayor, in commenting on the report, said the joy of the work had been damped owing to the attack which had been made by the Vicar of Crossens, who, as an amateur tramp, came into the shelter. The hard times through which they had been passing had brought along to the shelter quite a large number of men who were without the requisite three-pence that would admit them to the shelter and rough bed of a lodging-house. Many of them were without even a penny, but by means of that mission's work they were given the task of cutting wood and then supper and a lie down in a warm shelter. That shelter had sheltered on an average, nearly 43 men a night.

THE CONDITIONS AT THE SHELTER.

The conditions were not ideal; they had been complaining of the conditions and begging the people of Preston for years past to give them money to enable them to erect a shelter to carry on the work efficiently. The people of Preston had not responded up to the present moment, but he thought they would respond.

Twelve months ago, seeing they had land occupied by houses, they said, "This work must be done," and £1,100 had been spent on building a very good shelter.

Mr. Edwards, in a pamphlet which he had issued, entitled "A Vicar as Vagrant," had made many mis-statements in connection with the work, and he (the Mayor) was requested by the committee to read the following addition to the report:—

The committee's attention having been drawn to the above, a letter was sent to the vicar asking for an apology and the withdrawal of the chapter relating to the Shepherd-street Mission Shelter, but in his reply the whole thing was shelved, and no apology rendered. The matter was then put into the hands of our solicitor, and he is now dealing with it.

The only fault with the shelter is, it is too small, and those who come to these meetings, and those who read our reports know that for four years we have been struggling to remedy this, and now it is accomplished, as will be seen by this report.

"May I say for myself," added the Mayor, "and without any word from the committee, that if the Vicar of Crossens would only call upon me I shall have very great pleasure in going and showing him the work that was in progress long before he came to visit our old shelter and show him he has made a very great mistake."

The Mayor added that the work was being carried on on careful lines, on Christian lines, and on lines that if there was a spark of goodness in a man it should be helped. (Applause.)

Sir John Kirk, in moving the adoption of the report, emphasised the need there was for a work such as was being carried on at that institution.

Major Stanley, who seconded, said he had no direct association with the Shepherd-street Mission. From all he had heard of it he thought the words the Mayor had used in refuting the attack that had been made had not been at all too strong.

He did not suppose that everything was perfect, but he thought when an attempt was being made, such as was being made in this case, to raise the fallen, it was not necessary to make attacks upon it which could not be absolutely and entirely substantiated.

The report was adopted.

Mr. Geo. Toulmin, M.P., moved a resolution:— That this meeting commends the Shepherd-street Mission and Home for Orphan and Destitute Children to the liberal support of the community, believing it is doing a good work among the poor children of our town.

WORK WELL DONE.

Mr. Toulmin said reference had been made to the criticism of this mission, but he, as one who saw something of what was going on, would say that rather than criticise the mission and its helpers he should like to see a little more criticism of those who were not helping. (Applause.) There was a great deal more left undone by the community, and a great deal more criticism might be passed because that was left undone, than could be passed on the methods of those who were carrying on this work.

They were doing a little, but they were doing it well, and, therefore, if anybody wanted to criticise, let them criticise by coming and helping and improving, because from what he knew of the ladies and gentlemen connected with that mission, they were always willing to better what they had done in the past. (Applause.)

Referring to the report, in which it was stated that two children were working and living in the home, Mr. Toulmin said that from what he knew of Preston the greatest need of the town at present was a working boys' home and a working girls' home, and if anyone wanted to criticise let them start such a home as that.

There were working boys' homes which were carried on by charitable persons belonging to one of the great religious communities—and they were doing a good work—but there was room for others, and he called upon critics to start one, and take up work which they could not expect Mr. Williamson with the resources in this case to carry on. (Applause.)

The resolution was carried.

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HELPING HUNGRY CHILDREN.

THE WORK AT SHEPHERD-STREET MISSION, PRESTON. 1910

WORKING MAN'S TOUCHING APPEAL

Our Commissioner's article on the great work done by the Shepherd-street unsectarian mission, and his recital of proved cases certified by clergy of various churches and by the schoolmasters and mistresses of the town, has roused the deepest sympathy. The children have stirred themselves, and toys and clothing are coming in. It is important that the clothing should be fairly strong and wearable. The subscriptions are coming in, but not on the scale required by the needs of the ragged little children. Between 400 and 500 pairs of clogs are being given out, and every sixpence is welcome.

We have received the following touching letter from a working man in Preston:—

"I would like to appeal to the public to respond with their small sums to help the children fund—God help the poor, little, defenceless children. I would like to suggest that collectors should wait at the factory gates on Saturdays until Christmas. Times are bad, wages are low, but I think every man should deny himself two pints of beer or one ounce of tobacco, or abstain from going to the theatre or music-hall, or picture palace, once per week, and give something to the children fund. Every man, woman, and child can help this fund.

"I make an earnest appeal to all working men to help this noble cause. And you mothers remember that some day the bread winner may be taken from you. Think of those dear children of yours. No one should starve. The think of those helpless and defenceless children who are starving. Money is wanted to feed them; will you help? I enclose my small mite—2s.—and I make my appeal because I was once an outcast. God help the poor."

SHELTER WORK. 1910

DR. KNOX EXPLAINS HIS VIEWS AT PRESTON.

Presiding at a drawing-room meeting in connection with the Preston Church Army Labour Home, in the Guild Hall, Preston, this afternoon, the Bishop of Manchester congratulated those associated with the Home on the way in which it was achieving the purpose for which it was founded. He looked upon it as by no means a small gain that the shelter in connection with the Home had been closed, and that they had substituted for that shelter work the more fruitful work of providing labour and sustaining the character of men.

He did not say that shelter work was in itself bad, but he had more than a suspicion that the multiplying of shelters, if it was not very carefully watched, would multiply the number of people who took refuge in shelters.

They did not want to make it too easy for anyone to run away from his home and friends, to move from one place to another, from one shelter to another, with the inevitable result of at last falling into the casual ward.

Shelters might be useful occasionally in order to get hold of some of the better men and pass them into the Home, but the real thing was the work of the Home itself. (Applause.)

How the genuine tramp was to be aided without some system of compulsion no one had yet satisfactorily shown. It might be that they would be forced on to some system of compulsory homes for those who refused to work except under compulsion.

At present they were a great injury to society, and a still greater injury to those who were willing to work and desirous of finding work, but for some reason or another had fallen into temporary misfortune. (Applause.)