

SSM 21

1911

DEATH OF MRS. WILLIAMSON, OF PRESTON.

WILL YOU HELP?

FEEDING AND CLOTHING POOR CHILDREN.

CHRISTMAS APPEAL FOR SHEPHERD-STREET MISSION, PRESTON.

HOW CASES OF DISTRESS ARE RELIEVED.

(BY OUR COMMISSIONER.)

"For there are no sorrows like unto the sorrows of poor children, and no greater duty in life than helping them."

The Shepherd-street Mission, Preston, has sustained a great and grievous loss. "The angel of the slums," as she was affectionately called by all who knew her dauntless, untired, bountiful life, has passed on to "the shining city." The very fact of the death of Mrs. Williamson, who has, day and night, without a murmur, even in the hours of the acute sufferings which so suddenly ended her life, ministered to the deserted, starving children who were compassionately taken to the Oxford-street Home connected with the slum rescue work to which she and her husband have for years devoted themselves, without any pecuniary reward, ought to form a sufficiently solemn appeal to all who are filled with the fulness of love for little children to come forward this Christmastide with those offerings which yield a double blessing—a blessing to the giver, and also to the receiver.

To comprehend this noble ministration to poverty you must go down into the depths of the slums. Here in Shepherd-street is a mission-room, built by those whose hearts have gone out to the needy. It is absolutely unsectarian, and there are given, largely out of funds so generously sent to the "Lancashire Daily Post," daily dinners in the winter, sometimes to 300, and at times to 600, of the most wretched, poverty-stricken, suffering children the town contains. By the kindness of Dr. Brown boilers have been provided for the cooking of the nutritious soup, which is served out along with a great piece of bread to each child. This very week the hungry children, many of them not even having had a bite to breakfast, hasten—many of them I have seen running—to the mission-room for their hot nutritious dinner. They are not asked a word whether they belong to this church or that. If they are hungry they are helped.

VOLUNTARY WORK.

What I wish to emphasise is this—that there are no paid officers here; that the work for the children is done voluntarily and most humbly and earnestly by just a few who wish to do what they can in this life for the downcast and the suffering children.

Let us look at facts sent in during the past few days by ministers and clergymen, schoolmasters and mistresses of all churches and schools, of cases which they have personally investigated, and which they have commended to the help and comfort of this Mission of the Good Shepherd, as I prefer to call it, with the most eloquent of reasons. The first form I come to shows that the father is a labourer, out of work, that there are ten of a family, and that the total income derived from two children working is nine shillings weekly, to pay rent and maintain and clothe them all. Next is a case in which there are seven in the family, with very little income, and two of the boys are without shirts, and all are very poorly clad. A man went abroad, and sent for his wife and children. His mother longed for them to come back, and sent the passage money. Just before the steamer started for England the man disappeared, and the poor woman returned to Preston with seven children, one of whom is working as a half-timer, and that is all the income. They are all daily fed at Shepherd-street. A woman with eight children has a total income of five shillings per week.

"MISERABLY POOR."

The master of a Catholic school sends the case of a family of nine where the total income is 5s. per week, and he adds, "They seem miserably poor." There is a family of five in Everton Gardens. The father was a labourer, is out of employment, and the total income is 5s. 6d. a week. "They seem very poor," says the schoolmaster. "May I ask for dinner tickets for them?" The case of a widow is certified by the master of Holy Trinity School—a family of five. Mother chaws now and then; total income, 10s. to 12s. a week. From a Catholic school comes a recommendation for a family of seven; father and mother out of work, one child working and earning 7s., and the master adds, "The children attend school regularly."

"I believe the case is a worthy and certainly a needy one," says the Rev. Geo. H. Lunn, of All Saints' Vicarage, who appeals to the mission for a family of four, whose income is only 8s. a week. In St. Saviour's district an appeal is made for a case of nine in a family; a lady in the Avenham district seeks help for a family of seven, father out of work, weekly income from mother charring and child working, six shillings. From St. Saviour's Ragged School comes an appeal for a poor family of twelve, and the Rev. E. Over, of St. Saviour's, asks for help for a family of seven, the total income being derived from a child working half-time.

WILL YOU HELP?

There are heaps of other cases from the pile before me—cases vouched for by the masters and mistresses of elementary schools in Preston and clergy and ministers of the town. All tell the same tale of suffering, privation, and need of help—the cry of the very poor.

I think I have established, by these appeals sent to Shepherd-street Mission, the absolutely unsectarian character of the work, and will now leave the cries of the poor and needy to the charity of all who, at this eve of the Festival of the Nativity, feel that they have the truly Christian disposition to listen to the sorrows of poor little children.

We to-day open a "Lancashire Daily Post" Fund for food and clothing for the children who go each day to the Shepherd-street Mission for their dinner. Over 500 of the barefooted little ones of Preston and district were last winter supplied with clogs and articles of clothing from this fund.

This morning, after a somewhat lengthy illness, the death took place of Mrs. Williamson, wife of Mr. Williamson, of the Shepherd-street Mission, slums. She and her husband have for years lived and laboured for the poor, deserted, ragged, and neglected children of the slums, without fee or reward. They have been assisted by a few friends, and the "Lancashire Daily Post" Christmas Fund has largely paid all the costs of providing daily dinners in the winter months for 400 and 500 children, as well as providing clogs for many hundreds of waifs who would otherwise have been barefooted in the cold weather.

At the Oxford-street Home some 30 deserted children have been kept and looked after by Mrs. Williamson and her husband. Full of disease and starved, the little ones required infinite patience and attention, whining through the night, and they often had to be carried about and comforted hour by hour. This Mrs. Williamson did with wonderful patience, and never was a murmur heard. Children brought in a starved, pinched, sick condition have been nursed back to strength, and away in Canada at this moment are lads doing well and growing into manly men on big farms.

Some of the children were deserted by tramps; others left in mysterious desertion. With all the tales of the slums, Mrs. Williamson was sadly familiar. She and her husband gave up a good business in which they had accumulated money, and all that has been spent on the poor, the burden being beyond bearing until on our appeal seven years ago the readers of the "Lancashire Daily Post" came to the rescue. That appeal will once more be made in a few days.

During her illness Mrs. Williamson was attended by Dr. Smith, of Fishergate-hill, who has given his services for years to the mission.

DEATH OF MRS. WILLIAMSON.—Mrs. Williamson, wife of Mr. J. Williamson, of the Shepherd-street Mission, died on Saturday after a long illness. Many years ago Mr. and Mrs. Williamson retired from a profitable business in Cannon-street to devote themselves to the service of the poor, deserted, and ragged children of the town, receiving neither fee nor reward. The work grew, the money accumulated in business became exhausted, and financial help was imperative if the ministrations to numbers of friendless little ones were to be carried on. A few friends came to their aid, and seven years ago, in response to a public appeal, the readers of the "Lancashire Daily Post" gave generous support, and each succeeding year have subscribed funds sufficient to pay practically all the cost of providing daily dinners in the winter months for between 400 and 500 children, and clogs for many hundreds of waifs, who would otherwise have been barefooted in the cold weather. In the Oxford-street Home some 30 deserted children have been reared with tender care by Mrs. Williamson and her husband. Many, diseased and emaciated, required infinite patience and attention, often by night as well as day, yet Mrs. Williamson, who has been aptly described as the "angel of the slums," carried out this self-imposed task with wonderful patience, and never was a murmur heard. Abandoned children, whose sad physical condition on admission must have moved with compassion even those familiar with the melodramas of the slums, have been nursed back to health and strength, and in Canada at this moment there are these lads doing well, and growing into manly men on big farms, and filling honoured places in the world. During her illness Mrs. Williamson was attended by Dr. Turnbull-Smith, of Fishergate-hill, who for years has given his services to the mission. It was consistent with the deceased lady's extreme modesty and self-effacement that she should have desired that no reference should be made to her in the papers, but it was impossible to withhold a tribute to one who had devoted her life to so beneficent a work, and counted no sacrifice too great to minister to the needs of suffering children. On behalf of the mission the "Lancashire Daily Post" Christmas fund will shortly be opened.

DEATH OF MRS. WILLIAMSON, PRESTON.

On Saturday morning, after a long illness, Mrs. Williamson, wife of Mr. Williamson, of the Shepherd-street Mission, Preston, died at the home in Oxford-street. At the home some 30 waifs have been kept and trained under the supervision of Mr. and Mrs. Williamson. The deceased lady, so consistent with her extreme modesty and self-effacement, was desirous that not a word should be said of her in the papers. It is impossible to omit this duty to one who has been well described as the "angel of the slums."