

Professional Review.

BRITAIN'S NEXT CAMPAIGN.

All who are interested in slumland, and the social problems arising out of conditions which prevail therein, and which are a standing disgrace to this country, should read "Britain's Next Campaign," by Julie Sutter, published by R. Brimley Johnson, 4, Adam Street, Adelphi, price 1s.

A preface by Canon Scott Holland opens with the words:—

"The book has been wrung at white heat out of the furnace of pity. It appeals to those on whom the same fire has passed. They will not withhold their sympathy or their interest because of this or that incidental statement which may appear to them beyond the mark. They will recognise the touch of a soul that has taken the sorrows and sufferings of the people as her own, and who does not spare herself or ignore her own responsibility, and who simply desires to make her own contribution to the rally of brain and heart and will which is at work on all sides in the good cause of the Poor."

The writer goes on to show how the book deals with the "unmitigated horror of the city slums. There are the children in the one-room tenement, stunted, broken, degraded, demoralised; compelled to perpetuate the very slum which has been their own curse." On the other hand, "there is the shameless waste, the riotous living, the cruel commercial greed which are the signals of moral anarchy. . . . The interests implicated are too immense and too far-reaching to be touched; they hold in their grip the main mass of the dominant social influences. And still the crowds pour into the stifled cities; and still the burden of rent rises higher and higher; and still the entire body of our land laws plays into the hands of those who grind the faces of the poor; and still the power of the monopoly in land is allowed to work out its horrible results in the speculations that find in the worst slum properties their finest field; and still, outside the herded rookeries of the towns, the wide lands of England lie ever more waste and desolate, and their owners wail out their confession of impotence to find for them any use."

"It is," says Canon Scott Holland, "the 'Housing' difficulty which is making our people stunted in physique and homeless in soul. They have no 'homes'; and ceasing to have homes they are forbidden moral growth and moral character. . . . The horror rises as rents rise. And the book is right again in declaring that the Housing problem drives us straight back on to the question of the land. . . . The Housing Question cannot be touched without a readjustment of the laws of tenure and of rent. It is our part to face this, and to discuss what that readjustment involves."

Sir John McDougall, late Chairman of the London County Council, also contributes a preface, in which he says, "Why do the decent poor choose any hardship rather than enter 'the House'?" Is it not because there is a lack of classification? Are there not those who fail in the race of life from no fault of their own, and yet are compelled to dwell with all sorts and conditions who, from vicious habits, or unwillingness to do their share of labour, drift into a state of helplessness?

"Our people need housing; our people need up-lifting; our people need JUSTICE for the development

of their own humanity," is the main burden of this book. I would invite every Londoner, official or non-official, to make himself acquainted with its pages, taking to heart its suggestions. Possibly a new spirit of citizenship, a passion of redress, a power of personal service, may then spring up in our midst and do this work."

The lesson driven home by Miss Sutter is the homelessness of the people, and the resulting evils. "Britain has kept her home blessings for the few. What has she done to make them possible for the million? Thanks to the British land system there is not a more homeless race than the masses of our prosperous country. Even the Red Indian has his wigwam, which is his *own*; but the cottage homes of the United Kingdom for *own-ness* are a myth, a fiction. The land belongs to the few, and the people having none of it, unable, therefore, to make a living on the land, have drifted to the cities. For generations they have thus drifted, the result being that vast individual want, called collectively 'the unemployed,' which is fast growing to be a national punishment for a national sin.

"The 'homelessness' of our masses is not a figure of speech. It is a deep-seated canker, destroying the vitals of the empire! . . . Science has taught us the meaning of 'environment' as a race-producing factor. What, then, can we expect from the environment we have somehow allowed to be the seed-bed of the people?"

The book urges national effort to cope with the national need, and quotes John Stuart Mill's axiom: "When things are very bad small measures do not produce small effects, they produce no effect at all." Therefore the duty of citizenship is pressed home, and, as exemplifying what may be done in this connection, the systems known as the Elberfeld and the Leipzig systems are described in detail. For the details of the working of these systems, whereby the whole of the community are cared for by the city, and by means of the unpaid work of citizens, the reader must be referred to the book itself. The fundamental principle of both systems is that "no person within this city shall be left in want." "It is the completeness, the all-comprehensiveness, the thoroughness, the mercifulness, common-sense, and, above all, the *united action* which yield the results any visitor to these cities can verify for himself."

Miss Sutter points out the fundamental difference between our English and this German system.

"The English Poor Law admits of assistance only when a man is absolutely destitute—not before. But the one great point of the Elberfeld system is to keep the poor from becoming destitute. It is, indeed, a preventive system; and how much easier at all times is prevention than cure! And not only easier, how much more effective, how much more moral, how much more charitable."

Do we realise that in Great Britain about one person in every seven dies at public expense, either as a criminal or as a pauper?

One could go on quoting indefinitely from this book, but space forbids, and enough has been said to indicate its tenor. Those to whom its line appeals will do well to procure the book and study it for themselves. Close study it certainly merits. Its sincerity is apparent, its suggestions are pregnant with wisdom, and from cover to cover it abounds with truths forcefully put—truths which need to be driven home.

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