

and depressing, the public-house was the readiest relief. It was the gossip club of the neighbourhood; it was a chance for a bit of rest and for the "glass o' something" that brought a sense of new energy into the jaded body, and a new glow into the soul, that lessened the sense of life's dreariness, and lightened the sense of its burden. Drink is the counterpart of slum life. Give men and women the conditions that make life worth living, and you take away more than half the inducement to drink.

So the public-house became to her more and more the refuge from her miseries, and the drink became more and more a necessity, until the shame of drunkenness had to be drowned in drink. So she drank and sank, and sank and drank. The home, wretched enough at the best of times, became now unutterably miserable; the children were not only neglected, but the mother became their terror in her drunken rage and fury, and was then more than a match even for her husband. The poor fellow was almost driven to madness. The week's wages was taken for drink, and the children's clothes were pawned for it. He had himself to wash and dress the little ones, to scrub the floor—when it was scrubbed—and to get their scanty food ready, while the wife lay in a drunken stupor, or fiercely nagged and fought.

## CHAPTER II.

### IN THE SLUMS.

It is difficult to say which is the worst part of London, for its deeps go down into a gloom of horror that it is impossible to gauge. Certainly one of the worst it that in which this man and his wife had found their home. The great railway stations in that district have driven the people into a condition of overcrowding that is terrible, and there, where all is bad enough, is one court which the people themselves have named "the little hell." Here in one room the man and his wife and little ones had settled. A long way that from the country—a long way from the cottage with its flowers and purity and love.

The sisters of the West London Mission, who have a little settlement in the district, had been holding an open-air service, when one night the man came and asked, in a tone of almost savage despair, "What can you do for a fellow like me?"

"What's the matter?" said the sister.

"Matter! I'm mad! I've got a woman that's always drunk. She drinks the week's wages and pawns the children's clothes for drink."

"Come in here," said the sister, taking him into the Mission Hall and sitting down by his side.

"Do you know what God says?"

"No," said the man sullenly.

"He says that if you and I pray for her she shall be saved."

It was a bold rendering of the promise that "whatsoever two or three shall agree to ask as touching his kingdom, it shall be done unto them;" and it takes a woman to have such courage and faith."

"Now," the sister went on, "what we have to do is this—and we must shake hands over it—as I go about my work I shall lift my heart in prayer, and say, 'God bless that woman;' and as you go about your work you must say, 'God bless my wife.'"

The poor fellow went home, resolved to be patient and even hopeful. The wife lay on the floor in a drunken stupor. He got out the pail and filled it with water, and began to scrub the kitchen floor. Presently there came a knock at the door.

"Missis home?" asked the one who had called.

"Yes," said he; "she's on the booze again."

The woman woke up and heard him, and as the man turned round she staggered to her feet, seized the pail of water, and flung it over him, and then snatched up the poker and hit him a blow that almost cut his head open.

The man was taken to the hospital, and had his head bound up, and then he came back to the sister.

"I shall go mad!" said he, as he flung himself down on a bench.

It was a difficult case to comfort, but the sister's courage didn't fail her. "It's all right," said she; "you must not give up like this. You know when the Lord Jesus Christ was here on earth He cast the devil out of a child, and we are told that the devil rent and tore the child. This is the devil leaving your wife."

If a man had spoken the words there might perhaps have been the ready retort that the devil had torn the wrong one, but it's wonderful what comforts a man when a woman says it.

A month had passed, and the harvest thanksgiving was held on the Sunday. The next night was the "People's Drawing-Room"—that happy endeavour to fulfil the command of the Lord Jesus that when we make a feast