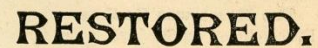




Fiction



I was the old story. Through drink and misfortune, poor Jack Dawson had come down to the position of a starving out-cast. All day long he wandered the streets, and hung about the big railway stations in the forlorn hope of picking up an odd job or two. Wet and hungry, he spent his last copper in purchasing the greatest boon of his life—admission to The Army Shelter. There at least he could find a respite from the dull grind of daily wretchedness ; there was warmth, cleanliness and a word of encouragement. Jack sat down in a quiet corner, after putting his boots and coat to dry, and made a good meal of the usual liberal supply of coffee and bread. Presently the bright Shelter Captain came round. "What's wrong?" said he. "You look rather bad. Cheer up, old boy!"

"Well," quoth Jack, "can you help me? I'm heartily sick of life altogether. No doubt I've been wrong, but this existence is really unbearable."

Following the Captain into the Shelter office, Jack completely broke down and told all. He was separated from wife and family, in fact, had deserted them and come down to the depths of misery.

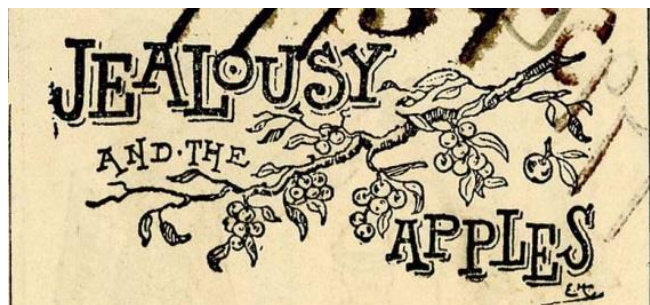
On the floor of the Shelter office the two

On the door of the shelter once the two knelt together. Jack prayed in penitence, confessed his sins, and rose a new man, regenerated by the Spirit of God, through faith in Jesus Christ. His next thought was of the wife and home he had basely deserted; and anxious to confess and atone for the past, he was soon hastening with The Army's representative through the crowded streets to the little cottage. At length they reached the door and knocked. Jack trembled at the thought that perhaps his wife had moved away, but she opened the door herself, and soon welcomed the prodigal home. There, in the tiny kitchen, they mingled their tears and thanks to God for the Social Scheme, by which the wanderer had been restored.

There are thousands of such outcasts haunting the streets of our great cities, thousands of such lonely wives and families left to battle with the world as best they can. But let us take courage. God is with us, for the past successes of the Social Scheme hold out to us blessed promises of still more wonderful achievements in the days to come, in stemming the tide of human misery.

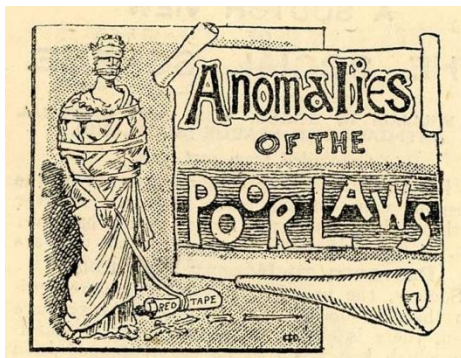
As a publication designed to appeal to a broad public readership, the *Gazette* modelled itself on other popular contemporary weekly magazines in offering content that was both varied and engaging. The full-page cover illustrations were a key way of drawing readers, but to hold their attention each issue presented its subject matter in a range of formats and genres including fiction.

Fiction is present in the *Gazette* from its earliest issues, and takes a variety of forms. The stories carried are primarily fictionalised versions of the types of personal problems The Salvation Army encountered in its Social Work, such as people losing their homes and families through addiction to alcohol or gambling. The first example of this is the short series of cautionary fragments 'Hell's Shaft Holes!' by Commissioner Elijah Cadman, the director of the Social Work, which ran in **issues 1–3**. **Issue 3** also contained 'Jack's Way Out', a short tale of redemption through The Salvation Army's new social institutions, the Labour Bureau and the Elevator. **Issue 5** introduced a short fictional account to accompany its cover illustration, 'Restored!', in which another Jack turns around his life of destitution and alcoholism after seeking help at a Salvation Army Shelter for homeless men. **Issue 12** to **issue 20** also saw intermittent short fiction depicting poverty and Salvation Army aid in the series 'Life As It Is!'. The signature W. H. H. points to Major William Henry Harding whose wife Annie was a prominent figure in the women's Rescue Work (see the *Darkest England Gazette* Research Guide on prostitution and the Rescue Work) and also regularly wrote for the *Gazette*. Some other fictional contributions, such as 'Jealousy and the Apples' in **issue 18**, blurred the line between reportage and fiction, using the format to report what they claimed were real events but without detail or context.



From August 1893, the *Gazette* also began to follow the contemporary fashion for serial fiction that ran over multiple issues. These stories worked to attract as well as retain readers. The first serial was 'Lost and Found in London', signed with the pseudonym 'Glow-Worm', which ran in **issues 7–15**. It is likely to have been popular, because the week after its conclusion immediately saw the beginning of another serial, 'The Sheridan Girls' (**issues 16–27**). This was unsigned, but the next, 'A

Young Man from the Country' (**issues 28–36**), was advertised as being by the same author.



The next two serials were the work of H. R. G. Gogay, a London Poor Law Guardian who had begun to contribute to the *Gazette* on the failings of the Poor Laws as he saw them in **issue 21** (see also the *Darkest England Gazette* Research Guide on the Poor Laws). Gogay began a regular feature entitled 'Anomalies of the Poor Laws'; in **issues**

30–40 this developed into a serial story under the title 'Anomalies of the Poor Laws: The Grotesque Removal Laws'. Gogay also contributed the next serial, 'The Outcast: A Tale of the Stone-Yard' (**issues 42–47**), based around the practice of stone-breaking in workhouses.

The final serial to be carried in the *Gazette*, which was completed in its final issue, was 'Joe Angus: A Gambling Tale of the North' (**issues 48–51**). This story was signed 'John Hollins'. It is possible that this was also the writer behind the pseudonym 'Glow-Worm'. One of their other pseudonymous contributions, 'Darkest Newcastle' (**issues 2 and 3**) noted that 'Glow-Worm' had 'recently migrated [to Newcastle] on some important business' which involved visiting the Salvation Army Slum Post in the town and meeting socially and economically prominent citizens. A letter to the editor in **issue 23** described John Hollins as Treasurer of the Newcastle Slum Corps, a role which would have required this kind of work.



The Salvation Army International Heritage Centre,

April 2020

Accessing the *Darkest England Gazette*:

The Salvation Army International Heritage Centre is currently working to digitise the *Darkest England Gazette* as a fully open access online resource. While we complete the digitisation process, we are able to offer sample scans of some issues and articles as part of our [Digital Collections](#).

If you would like to see an issue or article that is not currently available on the [Darkest England Gazette page](#), please feel free to [contact the Heritage Centre](#) for help. We may be able to send you a scan of the relevant pages, or you would be very welcome to visit our Reading Room in person to view the *Gazette* for yourself.

