



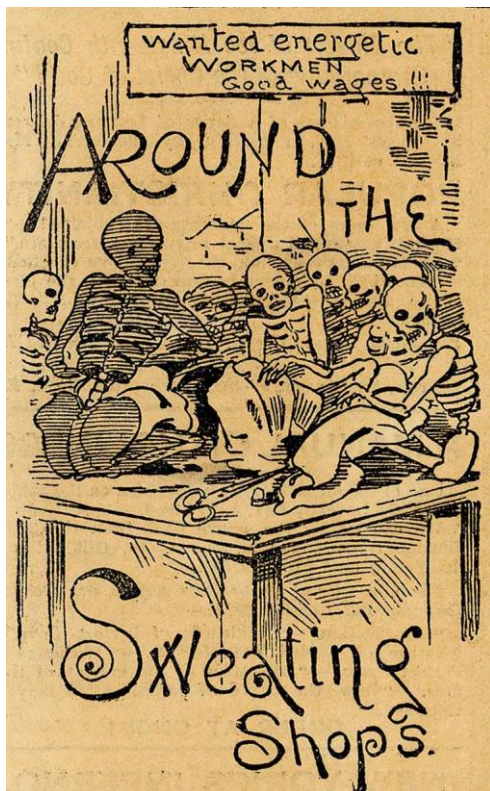
Salvation Army International Heritage Centre

Darkest England Gazette Research Guide

Sweating



SWEATING THE POOR TAILORESSES.



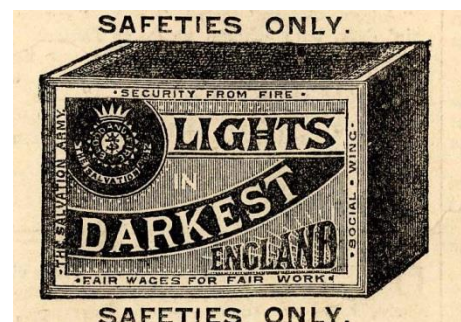
'Sweating', a common term for exploitative working practices characterised by long hours and low wages, was a subject of widespread concern in the late nineteenth century. The term covered men's and women's work, and home-based work as well as work in factories and small workshops called 'sweatshops'. Forms of sweating were depicted in fiction and the media, and drew interest from social reformers, labour organisers, and the government: in 1890 a House of Lords Select Committee investigated the so-called 'sweating system'. Common examples from the period include tailoring and dressmaking in homes and sweatshops, home-based matchbox making, and match production

in factories.

Combating sweating practices was a key aspect of the 'Darkest England Scheme', begun by Commissioner Frank Smith, who was a labour activist as well as a Salvationist, and continued by Commissioner Elijah Cadman. The *Darkest England Gazette* regularly exposed sweating practices, for instance through the feature 'The Sorrows of Shop Girls' in **issue 28** and in the series 'Around the Sweating Shops', which ran from **issue 49** to **issue 51**. It also advertised The Salvation Army's practical response to sweating, namely, the goods produced through its own workplaces. The most prominent of these was the Darkest England Match Factory: frequent advertisements emphasised that the Darkest England matches were 'anti-sweaters'.

The Darkest England Match Factory

The conditions of match production had been squarely in the public eye since the high-profile strike of the female workforce of the Bryant and May match factory in Bow, East London, in 1888. This strike had raised awareness not only of the



exploitative conditions in the factory which included precarious employment, low wages and long hours, and a punitive system of fines, but also of the enormous health risk involved in match production. The factory's matches were made with the poisonous substance yellow phosphorous which contaminated the workers' hands and their food. This led to the decay of workers' jaw bones, a condition known as 'phossy jaw'.

Building on this publicity, The Salvation Army opened its own match factory in 1891, promising that its matches were free from yellow phosphorus. It guaranteed that employees worked under healthy conditions for fair wages. The *Darkest England Gazette* was a key instrument in advertising the matches produced by the factory, which were more expensive than regular matches. Alongside reportage, fiction, and poetry representing the horrors of sweating and phossy jaw (for instance, 'Matches and Match-Makers', signed 'A Medical Man', in **issue 49**), it provided lists of retailers



in different towns that stocked the matches, leaving readers with no excuse not to buy them. See also our [research blog](#) on the [Match Factory](#).

Other Salvation Army industries whose products were advertised through the *Gazette* included the Knitting Factory, the Salvation Army Bakery, and the Social Rugs and Mats. The conditions of workers in Salvation Army workplaces, such as the 'Elevators', were showcased in the 'Types of Workers' series that ran from **issue 1** to **issue 22**. The 'Match Factory Lass' was the first 'type' to be introduced in the series in **issue 1**.

The Salvation Army International Heritage Centre,

July 2019

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.

