

**BALTIMORE'S NICKEL NURSERY**



By E. M. Colman

"Keep my babe? Yes? No?"  
"Yes we will keep your baby."  
Daily, excepting Sunday this eager question is breathlessly hurried at the matron of the Salvation Army's Slum Settlement and Day Nursery down at 319 South Anne street, and daily comes back the comforting assurance that sends the worried working mother rushing off to shop, or factory with her little one out of her arms and out of harm's way for the day.

Now the demand for admission for their children has become so great that many times daily must the refusal be given as the Board of Health has set a limit on the children admitted, though Captain Prendeville and her assistants would cheerfully take every little toddler brought to them if they had the room, beds and the equipment to care for them. Now twenty-five is all that can be accommodated.

These infants and toddlers are washed, fed, amused and put into snowy beds for their naps and the charge is five cents a day and no war tax.

Nothing in the world today is so cheap and yet so freighted with value as this Salvation Army Service to helpless children.

Picture these little people of from six months to eight years as they are poked bundle fashion through the little side gate of the Settlement House before 7 o'clock each morning as their mother hastily answers the whistle call to the factory or packing house.

Dirty, smelly, cross and hungry, frequently swarming with vermin, these small American born Poles, Russians and Italians are anything but attractive samples of humanity. Unwelcome, forlorn and anemic bits of human flotsam, most of them born out of wedlock, they are pitifully pathetic.

On arrival, they are tagged, and their clothing removed either to be hung to air or washed. Sometimes a little one is brought to the Nursery whose clothing has not been removed in months and where parents follow the custom of sewing them into their trappings in early fall and of which they are not divested until the next summer.

Often the first bath they have ever had they get at the Nursery, for Captain Prendeville puts cleanliness where a long line of New England ancestry has emphasized it—next to Godliness—and for her to do for them—they must be clean! She will do the cleaning thoroughly too. After the first shock, the children enjoy the novel sensation.

Fresh apron dresses are put upon them and here too, the great mother love, that is the guiding principle in this branch of the work is shown for no two aprons are made alike. Far from the institutional idea, this—but close to the childish heart, for the little garments all have pockets.

Promptly at eleven chairs that fit are put up to charming little tables, and small Polish and Russian get the daily lesson in unselfishness and table manners.

To some, a tablecloth, napkin and regular tableware, too, are novelties not understood at all but endured, and rather enjoyed—when delicious cocoa, bread and butter, vegetable or bean soup is the return for using them. No one dish is served two days in succession.

In good weather the children are turned loose in the big sunny back yard where the tormenting neighborhood hoodlums cannot molest them, or they romp at will in the cheerful nursery, with its abundant fresh air and sunshine, and when sleepy they are tucked away in snowy cribs—littered, in many instances, the first introduction to a clean and individual bed.

Loving care has covered the entire sweep of floors with linoleum, that baby fingers of many of these unwanted, neglected, children may be protected from splinters.

In mid afternoon comes another red letter hour, when bread and jam is served in between wonderful sessions with handy teddy bears, hobby horses, kiddy cars, velocipedes, Noah's Arks, and noble colonies of dolls, and camps of soldiers.

Every night when the mothers come for them, they are turned over to her dressed in their own clothes, fresh and clean, after a perfect day where they had nothing but love and kindness, and where two square meals came by magic just at the right time.

In the midst of this baby paradise secured for a nickel—and given without the nickel when it is not forthcoming—it is difficult to believe that children so young as these could be so steeped in vice and so cognizant of the horrible moral conditions in which they live.

In baby chatter, they prattle of a multiplicity of fathers, vice, profanity and obscenity, before they can do more than lip the words.

Four generations of Poles are represented in the nursery attendance, the great grandmother, forty years in America, proudly boasts of her loyalty to her own land and Tongue by refusing to learn our language. Though she has worked all these years in a Baltimore Packing House her English is limited to counting up to ten and one expression "Go to, . . . . .," which she uses frequently and impartially.

Thanks to the Salvation Army Nursery's Americanization System of instruction through games, marches and songs, none of her descendants will boast of anything but good United States.

The half-day school children love the Nursery too. They spend every afternoon that they can there, and tell their woes and joys to the Captain.

bench with the little bottle of poison clenched in her hand, the gentle faced Salvation Army Matron of the Rescue Home had passed her, and then came back to sit and talk with her. After coaxing out the story the officer made her throw away the poison and brought her here to stay.

She pleaded with her brother to keep her secret, threatening to kill herself if he failed her, making him agree to let the family believe her still safe and hard at work.

The reporter—had his story—but it never saw print. The sequel too—never saw print, for a determined young man some days later—appeared with a shame faced man and a wedding was consummated—true there was none of the usual joy and festivity but that girl was spared facing the world and her family, with a nameless child.

**PRESIDENT HARDING'S CONTRIBUTION**

With his recent contribution of \$5,000 to the Home Service Fund the President wrote: "No man is ever 'out' unless he himself confesses that he is. No organization among us has done more to prove this, or has proven it in more cases, than the Salvation Army."—Warren G. Harding, President.

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