

CHURCH LODGES EX-PRISONERS.

A church, with washing strung between the balconies! What's the explanation? A surprising one. It provides a home for men discharged from prison, who have nowhere else to go. They sleep and eat in the church, and this have an address. Ex-prisoners with "no fixed abode" - that harsh legal phrase - can get neither job nor public assistance. The Rev. Bertram Peake, Minister of Golborne Road Free Congregational Church, was perturbed when he heard rumour that Kensington Council might raise his rates because he was sheltering the men. In official eyes it amounted to using the church as a hostel. Yet, from earliest times, Churches always afforded sanctuary and rest for the unfortunate.

Leaving prison, this man, like so many, had nowhere to go, only a shilling or two in his pocket. But he had the luck to be met by a friend, offering to take him to the Golborne Road Church. Aid at just the right time helps the lame dog over the stile. And that sort of help so many ex-prisoners need is available here.

The friendly parson was on hand to welcome the new arrivals. Little had one of them thought, when the jail doors closed behind them that an hour later he'd be in a church. The men "inside" don't think much about angels from heaven, but the Rev. Bertram Peake must have seemed like one.

Two men living at the church have become engaged. They've got jobs and have shed the burden of the unhappy past. Meantime, the Borough had no intention of raising the church rates. Indeed one Councillor was so impressed by the good luck, he brought the church some clothing, and very welcome it was.

The parson often holds a little Bible class before the men turn in. He knows that most of them never cared a hang for religion before; now they're glad of it as a comfort and guide to the new experience of going straight.

And when they eat together, the Rev. Bertram Peake says grace, a prayer some of them had neverheard before they found refuge here at the church.

The old saying that God helps those that help themselves was never truer than in this day and age, not does it apply to any men more strongly than to this little flock. And the Rev. Peake, a practical Christian, is careful to point it out....