

Isabella Bird speaks with a poor resident in Edinburgh in the 18th century

By Stamatis Bellingham and John Hamilton

Isabella: Good day, John. I hope I'm not intruding. I've been speaking with some of the residents here in the slums of Edinburgh, trying to understand their experiences. Would you mind sharing yours with me?

John: Aye, I suppose I can spare a moment. Life 'round here ain't easy, that's for sure.

Isabella: I can only imagine. What's it like living in these conditions?

John: It's a constant struggle, it is. The rooms are cramped, the air is thick with smoke and sickness. We do what we can to survive, but it's never enough. Many nights, we go without a proper meal.

Isabella: That sounds incredibly difficult. How do you cope with such hardships?

John: We help each other out as best we can. Neighbors look after one another, sharing what little we have. But even then, it's not always enough. There's a sense of hopelessness that hangs over us like a cloud.

Isabella: I can see how that would weigh heavily on your spirit. Have you considered seeking a better life elsewhere?

John: Aye, many of us dream of escaping this place. Some try to find work in the factories or mills, while others seek refuge in the new buildings on the outskirts of town. But it's not easy. Opportunities are scarce, and the journey is fraught with danger.

Isabella: It must be incredibly challenging to even contemplate such a move. What are your hopes for the future?

John: My hope? Well, I suppose I dream of a day when my children won't have to endure the same hardships I have. A day when we can live in a place with clean air, proper food, and a chance for a better life. But for now, we take each day as it comes, clinging to whatever shred of hope we can find.

Isabella: Your resilience is truly remarkable, John. Thank you for sharing your story with me. I'll do my best to shed light on the struggles you and others face here in the slums of Edinburgh.