Neighbors

By

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Freeditorial

NEIGHBORS

THE ANSWER OF LUDLOW STREET

"You get the money, or out you go! I ain't in the business for me health," and the bang of the door and the angry clatter of the landlord's boots on the stairs, as he went down, bore witness that he meant what he said.

Judah Kapelowitz and his wife sat and looked silently at the little dark room when the last note of his voice had died away in the hall. They knew it well enough—it was their last day of grace. They were two months behind with the rent, and where it was to come from neither of them knew. Six years of struggling in the Promised Land, and this was what it had brought them.

A hungry little cry roused the woman from her apathy. She went over and took the baby and put it mechanically to her poor breast. Holding it so, she sat by the window and looked out upon the gray November day. Her husband had not stirred. Each avoided the question in the other's eyes, for neither had an answer.

They were young people as men reckon age in happy days, Judah scarce past thirty; but it is not always the years that count in Ludlow Street. Behind that and the tenement stretched the endless days of suffering in their Galician home, where the Jew was hated and despised as the one thrifty trader of the country, tortured alike by drunken peasant and cruel noble when they were not plotting murder against one another. With all their little savings they had paid Judah's passage to the land where men were free to labor, free to worship as their fathers did—a twice-blessed country, surely—and he had gone, leaving Sarah, his wife, and their child to wait for word that Judah was rich and expected them.

The wealth he found in Ludlow Street was all piled on his push-cart, and his persecutors would have scorned it. A handful of carrots, a few cabbages and beets, is not much to plan transatlantic voyages on; but what with Sarah's eager letters and Judah's starving himself daily to save every penny, he managed in two long years to scrape together the money for the steamship ticket that set all the tongues wagging in his home village when it came: Judah Kapelowitz had made his fortune in the far land, it was plain to be seen. Sarah and the boy, now grown big enough to speak his father's name with an

altogether cunning little catch, bade a joyous good-by to their friends and set their faces hopefully toward the West. Once they were together, all their troubles would be at an end.

In the poor tenement the peddler lay awake till far into the night, hearkening to the noises of the street. He had gone hungry to bed, and he was too tired to sleep. Over and over he counted the many miles of stormy ocean and the days to their coming, Sarah and the little Judah. Once they were together, he would work, work, work—and should they not make a living in the great, wealthy city?

With the dawn lighting up the eastern sky he slept the sleep of exhaustion, his question unanswered.

That was six years ago—six hard, weary years. They had worked together, he at his push-cart, Sarah for the sweater, earning a few cents finishing "pants" when she could. Little Judah did his share, pulling thread, until his sister came and he had to mind her. Together they had kept a roof overhead, and less and less to eat, till Judah had to give up his cart. Between the fierce competition and the police blackmail it would no longer keep body and soul together for its owner. A painter in the next house was in need of a hand, and Judah apprenticed himself to him for a dollar a day. If he could hold out a year or two, he might earn journeyman's wages and have steady work. The boss saw that he had an eye for the business. But, though Judah's eye was good, he lacked the "strong stomach" which is even more important to a painter. He had starved so long that the smell of the paint made him sick and he could not work fast enough. So the boss discharged him. "The sheeny was no good," was all the character he gave him.

It was then the twins came. There was not a penny in the house, and the rent money was long in arrears. Judah went out and asked for work. He sought no alms; he begged merely for a chance to earn a living at any price, any wages. Nobody wanted him, as was right and proper, no doubt. To underbid the living wage is even a worse sin against society than to "debase its standard of living," we are told by those who should know. Judah Kapelowitz was only an ignorant Jew, pleading for work that he might earn bread for his starving babies. He knew nothing of standards, but he would have sold his soul for a loaf of bread that day. He found no one to pay the price, and he came home hungry as he had gone out. In the afternoon the landlord called for the rent.

Another tiny wail came from the old baby carriage in which the twins slept, and the mother turned her head from the twilight street where the lights were beginning to come out. Judah rose heavily from his seat.

"I go get money," he said, slowly. "I work for Mr. Springer two days. He will give me money." And he went out.

Mr. Springer was the boss painter. He did not give Judah his wages. He had not earned them, he said, and showed him the door. The man pleaded hotly, despairingly. They were hungry, the little kids and his wife. Only fifty cents of the two dollars—fifty cents! The painter put him out, and when he would not go, kicked him.

"Look out for that Jew, John," he said, putting up the shutters. "We shall have him setting off a bomb on us next. They turn Anarchist when they get desperate."

Mr. Springer was, it will be perceived, a man of discernment.

Judah Kapelowitz lay down beside his wife at night without a word of complaint. "To-morrow," he said, "I do it."

Larger Image
"he tied his feet together with the prayer shawl,
and looked once upon the rising sun."

He arose early and washed himself with care. He bound the praying-band upon his forehead, and upon his wrist the tefillin with the Holy Name; then he covered his head with the tallith and prayed to the God of his fathers who brought them out of bondage, and blessed his house and his children, little Judah and Miriam his sister, and the twins in the cradle. As he kissed his wife good-by, he said that he had found work and wages, and would bring back money. She saw him go down in his working clothes; she did not know that he had hidden the tallith under his apron.

He did not leave the house, but, when the door was closed, went up to the roof. Standing upon the edge of it, he tied his feet together with the prayer shawl, looked once upon the rising sun, and threw himself into the street, seventy feet below.

“It is Judah Kapelowitz, the painter,” said the awed neighbors, who ran up and looked in his dead face. The police came and took him to the station-house, for Judah, who living had kept the law of God and man, had broken both in his dying. They laid the body on the floor in front of the prison cells and covered it with the tallith as with a shroud. Sarah, his wife, sat by, white and tearless, with the twins at her breast. Little Miriam hid her head in her lap, frightened at the silence about them. At the tenement around the corner men were carrying her poor belongings out and stacking them in the street. They were homeless and fatherless.

Ludlow Street had given its answer.

KIN

Early twilight was setting in on the Holy Eve. In the streets of the city stirred the bustling preparation for the holiday. The great stores were lighting up, and crowds of shoppers thronged the sidewalks and stood stamping their feet in the snow at the crossings where endless streams of carriages passed. At a corner where two such currents met sat an old man, propped against a pillar of the elevated road, and played on a squeaky fiddle. His thin hair was white as the snow that fell in great soft flakes on his worn coat, buttoned tight to keep him warm; his face was pinched by want and his back was bent. The tune he played was cracked and old like himself, and it stirred no response in the passing crowd. The tin cup in his lap held only a few coppers.

There was a jam of vehicles on the avenue and the crush increased. Among the new-comers was a tall young woman in a fur coat, who stood quietly musing while she waited, till a quavering note from the old man's violin found its way into her reveries. She turned inquiringly toward him and took in the forlorn figure, the empty cup, and the indifferent throng with a glance. A light kindled in her eyes and a half-amused smile played upon her lips; she stepped close to the fiddler, touched his shoulder lightly, and, with a gesture of gentle assurance, took the violin from his hands. She drew the bow across the strings once or twice, tightened them, and pondered a moment.

Presently there floated out upon the evening the familiar strains of "Old Black Joe" played by the hand of a master. It rose above the noise of the street; through the rattle and roar of a train passing overhead, through the calls of cabmen and hucksters, it made its way, and where it went a silence fell. It was as if every ear was bent to listen. The crossing was clear, but not a foot stirred at the sound of the policeman's whistle. As the last strain of the tune died away, and was succeeded by the appealing notes of "'Way Down upon the Suwanee River," every eye was turned upon the young player. She stood erect, with heightened color, and nodded brightly toward the old man. Silver coins began to drop in his cup. Twice she played the tune to the end. At the repetition of the refrain,

"Oh, darkies, how my heart grows weary,
Far from the old folks at home,"

a man in a wide-brimmed hat who had been listening intently emptied his pockets into the old man's lap and disappeared in the crowd.

Traffic on street and avenue had ceased; not a wheel turned. From street cars and cabs heads were poked to find out the cause of the strange hold-up. The policeman stood spellbound, the whistle in his half-raised hand. In the hush that had fallen upon the world rose clear and sweet the hymn, “It came upon a midnight clear,” and here and there hats came off in the crowd. Once more the young woman inclined her head toward the old fiddler, and coins and banknotes were poured into his cup and into his lap until they could hold no more. Her eyes were wet with laughing tears as she saw it. When she had played the verse out, she put the violin back into its owner’s hands and with a low “Merry Christmas, friend!” was gone.

The policeman awoke and blew his whistle with a sudden blast, street cars and cabs started up, business resumed its sway, the throng passed on, leaving the old man with his hoard as he gazed with unbelieving eyes upon it. The world moved once more, roused from its brief dream. But the dream had left it something that was wanting before, something better than the old man had found. Its heart had been touched.

THE WARS OF THE RILEYS

It was the night before Washington's Birthday that Mr. Riley broke loose. They will speak of it long in the Windy City as "the night of the big storm," and with good right—it was "that suddint and fierce," just like Mr. Riley himself in his berserker moods. Mr. Riley was one of the enlivening problems of "the Bureau" in the region back of the stock-yards that kept it from being dulled by the routine of looking after the poor. He was more: he rose to the dignity of a "cause" at uncertain intervals when the cost of living, underpay and overtime, sickness and death, overpopulation, and all the other well-worn props of poverty retired to the wings and left the stage to Mr. Riley rampant, sufficient for the time and as informing as a whole course at the School of Philanthropy. In between, Mr. Riley was a capable meat-cutter earning good wages, who wouldn't have done a neighbor out of a cent that was his due, a robust citizen with more than his share of good looks, a devoted husband and a doting father, inseparable when at home from little Mike, whose baby trick of squaring off and offering to "bust his father's face" was the pride of the block.

"Will yez look at de kid? Ain't he a foine one?" shouted Mr. Riley, with peals of laughter; and the men smoking their pipes at the fence set the youngster on with admiring taunts. Mike was just turned three. His great stunt, when his father was not at hand, was to fall off everything in sight. Daily alarms brought from the relief party of hurrying mothers the unvarying cry, "Who's got hurted? Is it Mike?" But only Mike's feelings were hurt. Doleful howls, as he hove in sight, convoyed and comforted by Kate, aged seven, gave abundant proof that in wind and limb he was all that could be desired.

This was Mr. Riley in his hours of ease and domesticity. Mr. Riley rampant was a very different person. His arrival was invariably heralded by the smashing of the top of the kitchen stove, followed by the summary ejection of the once beloved family, helter-skelter, from the tenement. Three times the Bureau had been at the expense of having the stove top mended to keep the little Rileys from starving and freezing at once, and it was looking forward with concern to the meat-cutter's next encounter with his grievance. For there was a psychological reason for the manner of his outbreaks. The Rileys had once had a boarder, when Kate was a baby. He happened to be Mrs. Riley's brother, and he left, presuming on the kinship, without paying his board. As long as the meat-cutter was sober he remembered only the pleasant comradeship with his brother-in-law, and extended the hospitality of a neighborly fireside to his wife's relations. But no sooner had he taken a drink or two than the old

grievance loomed large, and grew, as he went on, into a capital injury, to be avenged upon all and everything that in any way recalled the monstrous wrong of his life. That the cooking-stove should come first was natural, from his point of view. Upon it had been prepared the felonious meals, by it he had smoked the pipe of peace with the false friend. The crash in the kitchen had become the unvarying signal for the hasty exit of the rest of the family and the organizing of Kate into a scouting party to keep Mrs. Riley and the Bureau informed about the progress of events in the house where the meat-cutter raged alone.

Mrs. Riley was a loyal, if not always a patient, woman—who can blame her?—and accepted the situation as part of the marital compact, clearly comprehended, perhaps foreshadowed, in her vow to cling to her husband "for better for worse," and therefore not to be questioned. In times of peace she remembered not the days of storm and stress. Once indeed, when her best gingham had been sacrificed to the furies of war, she had considered whether the indefinite multiplication of the tribe of Riley were in the long run desirable, and had put it to the young woman from the Bureau, who was superintending the repair of the stove top, this way: "I am thinking, Miss Kane, if I will live with Mr. Riley any longer; would you?"—to the blushing confusion of that representative of the social order. However, that crisis passed. Mr. Riley took the pledge for the fourth or fifth time, and the next day appeared at the office, volunteering to assign himself and his earnings to the Bureau for the benefit of his wife and his creditors, reserving only enough for luncheons and tobacco, but nothing for drinks. The Bureau took an hour off to recover from the shock. If it had misgivings, it refused to listen to them. The world had turned a corner in the city by the lake and was on the home-stretch: Mr. Riley had reformed.

And, in truth, so it seemed. For once he was as good as his word. Christmas passed, and the manifold temptations of New Year, with Mike and his father still chums. Kate was improving the chance to profit by the school-learning so fatally interrupted in other days. Seventeen weeks went by with Mr. Riley's wages paid in at the Bureau every Saturday; the grocer smiled a fat welcome to the Riley children, the clock man and the spring man and the other installment collectors had ceased to be importunate. Mrs. Riley was having blissful visions of a new spring hat. Life back of the stock-yards was in a way of becoming ordinary and slow, when the fatal twenty-second of February hove in sight.

The night before, Mr. Riley, quitting work, met a friend at the gate, who, pitying his penniless state, informed him that "there was the price of a drink at the corner" for him, meaning at Quinlan's saloon. Now this was prodding the meat-

cutter in a tender spot. He hated waste as much as his employers, who proverbially exploited all of the pig but the squeal. He didn't want the drink, but to have it waiting there with no one to come for it was wicked waste. It was his clear duty to save it, and he did. Among those drinking at the bar were some of his fellow-workmen, who stood treat. That called for a return, and Riley's credit was good. It was late before the party broke up; it was a.m. when the meat-cutter burst into the tenement, roaring drunk, clamoring for the lives of brothers-in-law in general and that of his own in particular, and smashed the stove lids with crash after crash that aroused the slumbering household with a jerk.

For once it was caught napping. The long peace had bred a fatal sense of security. Kate was off scouting duty and Mrs. Riley had her hands full with Pat, Bridget, and the baby all having measles at once—too full to take warning from her husband's suspicious absence at bedtime. Roused in the middle of the night to the defense of her brood, she fought gallantly, but without hope. The battle was bloody and brief. Beaten and bruised, she gathered up her young and fled into the blinding storm to the house of a pitying neighbor, who took them in, measles and all, to snuggle up with his own while he mounted guard on the doorstep against any pursuing enemy. But the meat-cutter merely slammed the door upon his evicted family. He spent the rest of the night smashing the reminders of his brother-in-law's hated kin. Kate, reconnoitering at daybreak, brought back word that he was raging around the house with three other drunken men. The opening of the Bureau found her encamped on the doorstep with a demand that help come quickly—the worst had happened. "Has little Mike broken his neck?" they asked in breathless chorus. "Worse nor that," she panted; "do be comin', Miss Kane!"

"Oh, what is it? Are any of the children dead?"

"Worse nor that; Mr. Riley has broke loose!" Kate always spoke of her father in his tantrums as Mister, as if he were a doubtful acquaintance. Her story of the night's doings was so lurid that the intimacy of many a post-bellum remorse felt unequal to the strain, and Miss Kane commandeered a policeman on the way to the house. The meat-cutter received her with elaborate inebriate courtesy, loftily ignoring the officer.

"Who is he?" he asked, aside.

She tried evasion. "A friend of mine I met." She was sorry immediately.

“Is he that? Then he is no friend of mine. Oh, Miss Kane,” he grieved, “why did you go for to get him? You know I’d have protected you!” This with an indignant scowl at his fellow-marauders, who were furtively edging toward the door. An inquest of the house showed the devastation of war. The kitchen was a wreck; the bedroom furniture smashed; the Morris chair in which the family of young Rileys had reveled in the measles lay in splinters. “It was so hot here last night,” suggested the meat-cutter, gravely, “it must have fell to pieces.” In the course of the inspection Mrs. Riley appeared, keeping close to the policeman, wrathful and fearful at once, with a wondrous black eye. Her husband regarded it with expert interest and ventured the reflection that it was a shame, and she the fine-looking woman that she was! At that Mrs. Riley edged away toward her husband and eyed the bluecoat with hostile looks.

Between crying and laughing, “the Bureau lady” dismissed the policeman and officiated at the reunion of the family on condition that the meat-cutter appear at the office and get the dressing down which he so richly deserved, which he did. But his dignity had been offended by the brass buttons, and he insisted upon its being administered by one of his own sex.

“I like her,” he explained, indicating Miss Kane with reproving forefinger, “but she’s gone back on me.” Another grievance had been added to that of the unpaid board.

The peace that was made lasted just ten days, when Mr. Riley broke loose once more, and this time he was brought into court. The whole Bureau went along to tell the story of the compact and the manner of its breaking. Mr. Riley listened attentively to the recital of the black record.

“What have you to say to this?” scowled the Judge. The prisoner nodded.

“It is all true what the lady says, your Honor; she put it fair.”

“I have a good mind to send you to Bridewell to break stone.”

“Don’t do that, Judge, and lose me job. I want to be wid me family.” Mrs. Riley looked imploringly at the bench. His Honor’s glance took in her face with the family group.

“Looks like it,” he mused; but in the end he agreed to hand him over to the Bureau for one more trial, first administering the pledge in open court. Mr. Riley took the oath with great solemnity and entire good faith, kissed the Bible with a smack, reached up a large red fist for the Judge to shake, and the clerk. Then he pledged lasting friendship to the whole Bureau, including Miss Kane, whom he generously forgave the wrong she had done him, presented little Mike to the Court as “de foinest kid in de ward,” took the gurgling baby from Mrs. Riley and gallantly gave her his arm. Leaning fondly upon it, a little lame and sore yet from the fight and with one eye in deep mourning, she turned a proudly hopeful look upon her husband, like a rainbow spanning a black departing cloud. And thus, with fleet-footed Kate in the van proclaiming the peace, and three prattling children clinging to their hands and clothes, they passed out into life to begin it anew. And bench and Bureau, with sudden emotion, hopelessly irrational and altogether hopeful and good, cheered them on their way.

LIFE'S BEST GIFT

Margaret Kelly is dead, and I need not scruple to call her by her own name. For it is certain that she left no kin to mourn her. She did all the mourning herself in her lifetime, and better than that when there was need. She nursed her impetuous Irish father and her gentle English mother in their old age—like the loving daughter she was—and, last of all, her only sister. When she had laid them away, side by side, she turned to face the world alone, undaunted, with all the fighting grit of her people from both sides of the Channel. If troubles came upon her for which she was no match, it can be truly said that she went down fighting. And who of her blood would ask for more?

What I have set down here is almost as much as any one ever heard about her people. She was an old woman when she came in a way of figuring in these pages, and all that lay behind her.

Of her own past this much was known: that she had once been an exceedingly prosperous designer of dresses, with a brown-stone house on Lexington Avenue, and some of the city's wealthiest women for her customers. Carriages with liveried footmen were not rarely seen at her door, and a small army of seamstresses worked out her plans. Her sister was her bookkeeper and the business head of the house. Fair as it seemed, it proved a house of cards, and with the sister's death it fell. One loss followed another. Margaret Kelly knew nothing of money or the ways of business. She lost the house, and with it her fine clients. For a while she made her stand in a flat with the most faithful of her sewing-women to help her. But that also had to go when more money went out than came in and nothing was left for the landlord. Younger rivals crowded her out. She was stamped "old-fashioned," and that was the end of it. Her last friend left her. Worry and perplexity made her ill, and while she was helpless in Bellevue Hospital, being in a ward with no "next friend" on the books, they sent her over to the Island with the paupers. Against this indignity her proud spirit arose and made the body forget its ills. She dragged herself down to the boat that took her back to the city, only to find that her last few belongings were gone, the little hall room she had occupied in a house in Twenty-ninth Street locked against her, and she, at seventy-five, on the street, penniless, and without one who cared for her in all the world.

Yes, there was one. A dressmaker who had known her in happier days saw from her window opposite Father McGlynn's church a white-haired woman seek shelter within the big storm-doors night after night in the bitter cold of

midwinter, and recognized in her the once proud and prosperous Miss Kelly. Shocked and grieved, she went to the district office of the Charities with money to pay for shelter and begged them to take the old lady in charge and save her from want.

And what a splendid old lady she was! Famished with the hunger of weeks and months, but with pride undaunted, straight as an arrow under the burden of heavy years, she met the visitor with all the dignity of a queen. The deep lines of suffering in her face grew deeper as she heard her message. She drew the poor black alpaca about her with a gesture as if she were warding off a blow: "Why," she asked, "should any one intrude upon her to offer aid? She had not asked for anything, and was not—" she faltered a bit, but went on resolutely—"did not want anything."

"Not work?" asked her caller, gently. "Would you not like me to find some work for you?"

A sudden light came into the old eyes. "Work—yes, if she could get that—" And then the reserve of the long, lonely years broke down. She buried her face in her hands and wept.

They found her a place to sew in a house where she was made welcome as one of the family. For all that, she went reluctantly. All her stubborn pride went down before the kindness of these strangers. She was afraid that her hand had lost its cunning, that she could not do justice to what was asked of her, and she stipulated that she should receive only a dollar for her day's work, if she could earn that. When her employer gave her the dollar at the end of the day, the look that came into her face made that woman turn quickly to hide her tears.

The worst of Margaret Kelly's hardships were over. She had a roof over her head, and an "address." If she starved, that was her affair. And slowly she opened her heart to her new friends and gave them room there. I have a letter of that day from one of them that tells how they were getting on: "She has a little box of a room where she almost froze all winter. A window right over her bed and no heat. But she is a great old soldier and never whines. Occasionally she comes to see me, and I give her something to eat, but what she does between times God alone knows. When I give her a little change, she goes to the bake-shop, but I think otherwise goes without and pretends she is not hungry. A business man who knows her told her if she needed nourishment to

let him know; she said she did not need anything. Her face looks starvation. When she was ill in the winter, I tried to get her into a hospital; but she would not go, and no wonder. If she had only a couple of dollars a week she could get along, as I could get her clothing. She wears black for her sister."

The couple of dollars were found and the hunger was banished with the homelessness. Margaret Kelly had two days' work every week, and in the feeling that she could support herself once more new life came to her. She was content.

So two years passed. In the second summer the old woman, now nearing eighty, was sent out in the country for a vacation of five or six weeks. She came back strong and happy; the rest and the peace had sunk into her soul. "Some of the tragedy has gone out of her face," her friend wrote to me. She was looking forward with courage to taking up her work again when what seemed an unusual opportunity came her way. A woman who knew her story was going abroad, leaving her home up near Riverside Drive in charge of a caretaker. She desired a companion for her, and offered the place to Miss Kelly. It was so much better a prospect than the cold and cheerless hall room that her friends advised her to accept, and Margaret Kelly moved into the luxurious stone house uptown, and once more was warmly and snugly housed for the winter with congenial company.

Man proposes and God disposes. Along in February came a deadly cold spell. The thermometer fell below zero. In the worst of it Miss Kelly's friend from the "office," happening that way, rang the bell to inquire how she was getting on. No one answered. She knocked at the basement door, but received no reply. Concluding that the two women were in an upper story out of hearing of the bell, she went away, and on her return later in the day tried again, with no better success. It was too cold for the people in the house to be out, and her suspicions were aroused. She went to the police station and returned with help. The door was forced and the house searched. In the kitchen they found the two old women sitting dead by the stove, one with her head upon the other's shoulder. The fire had long been out and their bodies were frozen. There was plenty of fuel in the house. Apparently they had shut off the draught to save coal and raised the lid of the stove, perhaps to enjoy the glow of the fire in the gloaming. The escaping gas had put them both to sleep before they knew their peril.

So the police and the coroner concluded. “Two friends,” said the official report. Margaret Kelly had found more than food and shelter. Life at the last had given her its best gift, and her hungry old heart was filled.

DRIVEN FROM HOME

“Doctor, what shall I do? My father wants me to tend bar on Sunday. I am doing it nights, but Sunday—I don’t want to. What shall I do?”

The pastor of Olivet Church looked kindly at the lad who stood before him, cap in hand. The last of the Sunday-school had trailed out; the boy had waited for this opportunity. Dr. Schauffler knew and liked him as one of his bright boys. He knew, too, his home—the sordid, hard-fisted German father and his patient, long-suffering mother.

“What do you think yourself, Karl?”

“I don’t want to, Doctor. I know it is wrong.”

“All right then, don’t.”

“But he will kick me out and never take me back. He told me so, and he’ll do it.”

“Well—”

The boy’s face flushed. At fourteen, to decide between home and duty is not easy. And there was his mother. Knowing him, the Doctor let him fight it out alone. Presently he squared his shoulders as one who has made his choice.

“I can’t help it if he does,” he said; “it isn’t right to ask me.”

“If he does, come straight here. Good-by!”

Sunday night the door-bell of the pastor’s study rang sharply. The Doctor laid down his book and answered it himself. On the threshold stood Karl with a small bundle done up in a bandana handkerchief.

“Well, I am fired,” he said.

“Come in, then. I’ll see you through.”

The boy brought in his bundle. It contained a shirt, three collars, and a pair of socks, hastily gathered up in his retreat. The Doctor hefted it.

“Going light,” he smiled. “Men fight better for it sometimes. Great battles have been won without baggage trains.”

The boy looked soberly at his all.

“I have got to win now, Doctor. Get me a job, will you?”

Things moved swiftly with Karl from that Sunday. Monday morning saw him at work as errand-boy in an office, earning enough for his keep at the boarding-house where his mother found him at times when his father was alone keeping bar. That night he registered at the nearest evening school to complete his course. The Doctor kept a grip on his studies, as he had promised, and saw him through. It was not easy sledding, but it was better than the smelly saloon. From the public school he graduated into the Cooper Institute, where his teachers soon took notice of the wide-awake lad. Karl was finding himself. He took naturally to the study of languages, and threw himself into it with all the ardor of an army marching without baggage train to meet an enemy. He had “got to win,” and he did. All the while he earned his living working as a clerk by day—with very little baggage yet to boast of—and sitting up nights with his books. When he graduated from the Institute, the battle was half won.

The other half he fought on his own ground, with the enemy’s tents in sight. His attainments procured for him a place in the Lenox Library, where his opportunity for reading was limited only by his ambition. He made American history and literature his special study, and in the course of time achieved great distinction in his field. “And they were married and lived happily ever after” might by right be added to his story. He did marry an East Side girl who had been his sweetheart while he was fighting his uphill battle, and they have to-day two daughters attending college.

It is the drawback to these stories that, being true, they must respect the privacy of their heroes. If that were not so, I should tell you that this hero’s name is not Karl, but one much better befitting his fight and his victory; that he was chosen historian of his home State, and held the office with credit until spoils politics thrust him aside, and that he lives to-day in the capital city of another State, an authority whose word is not lightly questioned on any matter pertaining to Americana. That is the record of the East Side boy who was driven from home for refusing to tend bar in his father’s saloon on Sunday because it was not right.

He never saw his father again. He tried more than once, but the door of his home was barred against him. Not with his mother's consent; in long after years, when once again Dr. Schauffler preached at Olivet, a little German woman came up after the sermon and held out her hand to him.

"You made my Karl a man," she said.

"No," replied the preacher, soberly, "God made him."

THE PROBLEM OF THE WIDOW SALVINI

The mere mention of the widow Salvini always brings before me that other widow who came to our settlement when her rascal husband was dead after beating her black and blue through a lifetime in Poverty Gap, during which he did his best to make ruffians of the boys and worse of the girls by driving them out into the street to earn money to buy him rum whenever he was not on the Island, which, happily, he was most of the time. I know I had a hand in sending him there nineteen times, more shame to the judge whom I finally had to threaten with public arraignment and the certainty of being made an accessory to wife-murder unless he found a way of keeping him there. He did then, and it was during his long term that the fellow died. What I started to say was that, when all was over and he out of the way, his widow came in and wanted our advice as to whether she ought to wear mourning earrings in his memory. Without rhyme or reason the two are associated in my mind, for they were as different as could be. The widow of Poverty Gap was Irish and married to a brute. Mrs. Salvini was an Italian; her husband was a hard-working fellow who had the misfortune to be killed on the railway. The point of contact is in the earrings. The widow Salvini did wear mourning earrings, a little piece of crape draped over the gold bangles of her care-free girlhood, and it was not funny but infinitely touching. It just shows how little things do twist one's mind.

Signor Salvini was one of a gang of trackmen employed by the New York Central Railroad. He was killed when they had been in America two years, and left his wife with two little children and one unborn. There was a Workmen's Compensation Law at the time under which she would have been entitled to recover a substantial sum, some $, upon proof that he was not himself grossly to blame, and suit was brought in her name; but before it came up the Court of Appeals declared the act unconstitutional. The railway offered her a hundred dollars, but Mrs. Salvini's lawyer refused, and the matter took its slow course through the courts. No doubt the company considered that the business had been properly dealt with. It is quite possible that its well-fed and entirely respectable directors went home from the meeting at which counsel made his report with an injured feeling of generosity unappreciated—they were not legally bound to do anything. In which they were right. Signor Salvini in life had belonged to a benefit society of good intentions but poor business ways. It had therefore become defunct at the time of his death. However, its members considered their moral obligations and pitied the widow. They were all poor workingmen, but they dug down into their pockets and raised two hundred

dollars for the stricken family. When the undertaker and the cemetery and the other civilizing agencies that take toll of our dead were paid, there was left twenty dollars for the widow to begin life with anew.

When that weary autumn day had worn to an end, the lingering traces of the death vigil been removed, the two bare rooms set to rights, and the last pitying neighbor woman gone to her own, the widow sat with her dumb sorrow by her slumbering little ones, and faced the future with which she was to battle alone. Just what advice the directors of the railway that had killed her husband—harsh words, but something may be allowed the bitterness of such grief as hers—would have given then, surrounded by their own sheltered ones at their happy firesides, I don't know. And yet one might venture a safe guess if only some kind spirit could have brought them face to face in that hour. But it is a long way from Madison Avenue to the poor tenements of the Bronx, and even farther—pity our poor limping democracy!—from the penniless Italian widow to her sister in the fashionable apartment. As a household servant in the latter the widow Salvini would have been a sad misfit even without the children; she would have owned that herself. Her mistress would not have been likely to have more patience with her. And so that door through which the two might have met to their mutual good was closed. There were of course the homes for the little ones, toward the support of which the apartment paid its share in the tax bills. The thought crossed the mind of their mother as she sat there, but at the sight of little Louisa and Vincenzo, the baby, sleeping peacefully side by side, she put it away with a gesture of impatience. It was enough to lose their father; these she would keep. And she crossed herself as she bowed reverently toward the print of the Blessed Virgin, before which burned a devout little taper. Surely, She knew!

It came into her mind as she sat thinking her life out that she had once learned to crochet the fine lace of her native town, and that she knew of a woman in the next block who sold it to the rich Americans. Making sure that the children were sound asleep, she turned down the lamp, threw her shawl over her head, and went to seek her.

The lace woman examined the small sample of her old skill which she had brought, and promised to buy what she made. But she was not herself the seller, and the price she got was very low. She could pay even less. Unaccustomed fingers would not earn much at lace-making; everything depended on being quick at it. But the widow knew nothing else. It was at least work, and she went home to take up the craft of her half-forgotten youth.

But it was one thing to ply her needle with deft young fingers and the songs of sunny Italy in her ears, when the world and its tasks were but play; another to bait grim poverty with so frail a weapon in a New York tenement, with the landlord to pay and hungry children to feed. At the end of the week, when she brought the product of her toil to the lace woman, she received in payment thirty cents. It was all she had made, she was told.

There was still the bigger part of her little hoard; but one more rent day, and that would be gone. Thirty cents a week does not feed three mouths, even with the thousand little makeshifts of poverty that constitute its resources. The good-hearted woman next door found a spare potato or two for the children; the neighbor across the hall, when she had corned beef for dinner, brought her the water it was boiled in for soup. But though neighbors were kind, making lace was business, like running a railway, and its rule was the same—to buy cheap, lives or lace, and sell dear. It developed, moreover, that the industry was sweated down to the last cent. There was a whole string of women between the seller and the widow at the end of the line, who each gave up part of her poor earnings to the one next ahead as her patron, or padrone. The widow Salvini reduced the chain of her industrial slavery by one link when she quit making lace.

Upstairs in the tenement was a woman who made willow plumes, that were just then the fashion. To her went the widow with the prayer that she teach her the business, since she must work at home to take care of her children; and the other good-naturedly gave her a seat at her table and showed her the simple grips of her trade. Simple enough they were, but demanding an intensity of application, attention that never flagged, and deft manipulation in making the tiny knots that tie the vanes of the feather together and make the droop of the plume. Faithfully as she strove, the most she could make was three inches in a day. The price paid was eleven cents an inch. Thirty-three cents a day was better than thirty cents a week, but still a long way from the minimum wage we hear about. It was then, when her little margin was all gone and the rent due again, that the baby came. And with it came the charity workers, to back the helpful neighborliness of the tenement that had never failed.

When she was able to be about again, she went back to her task of making plumes. But the work went slower than before. The baby needed attention, and there were the beds to make and the washing for two lodgers, who paid the

rent and to whom the charity workers closed their eyes even if they had not directly connived at procuring them. It is thus that the grim facts of poverty set at naught all the benevolent purposes of those who fight it. It had forced upon the widow home-work and the lodger, two curses of the tenement, and now it added the third in child labor. Little Louisa's fingers were nimbler than her mother's. She was only eight, but she learned soon to tie a plume as well as the mother. The charity visitor, who had all the economic theories at her fingers' ends and knew their soundness only too well, stood by and saw her do it, and found it neither in her heart nor in her reason to object, for was she not struggling to keep her family together? Five-year-old Vincenzo watched them work.

"Could he make a plume, too?" she asked, with a sudden sinking of the heart. Yes, but not so fast; his wee hands grew tired so soon. And the widow let him show how he could tie the little strange knot. The baby rolled on the floor, crooning and sucking the shears.

In spite of the reënforcement, the work lagged. The widow's eyes were giving out and she grew more tired every day. Four days the three had labored over one plume, and finished it at last. To-morrow she would take it to the factory and receive for it ninety cents. But even this scant wage was threatened. Willow plumes were going out of fashion, and the harassed mother would have to make another start. At what?

The question was answered a month later as it must, not as it should be, when to the three failures of the plan of well-ordered philanthropy was added the fourth: Louisa and Vincenzo were put in the "college," as the Italians call the orphan asylum. The charity workers put them there in order that they might have proper food and enough of it. Willow plumes having become a drug in the market, the widow went into a factory, paying a neighbor in the tenement a few cents a day for taking care of the baby in her absence. As an unskilled hand she was able to earn a bare living. One poor home, that was yet a happy home once, was wiped out. The widow's claim against the railway company still waits upon the court calendar.

Such as it is, it is society's present solution of the problem of the widow Salvini. If any find fault with it, let them not blame the charity workers, for they did what they could; nor the railway company, for its ways are the ways of business, not of philanthropy; nor our highest court, for we are told that impious is the hand that is stretched forth toward that ark of the covenant of

our liberties. Let them put the blame where it belongs—upon us all who for thirty years have been silent under the decision which forbade the abolition of industrial slavery in the Bohemian cigar-makers' tenements because it would interfere with "the sacredness and hallowed associations of the people's homes." That was the exact phrase, if memory serves me right. Such was the sowing of our crop of social injustice. Shall a man gather figs from thistles?

PETER

Miss Wald of the Nurses' Settlement told me the story of Peter, and I set it down here as I remember it. She will forgive the slips. Peter has nothing to forgive; rather, he would not have were he alive. He was all to the good for the friendship he gave and took. Looking at it across the years, it seems as if in it were the real Peter. The other, who walked around, was a poor knave of a pretender.

This was Miss Wald's story:—

He came to me with the card of one of our nurses, a lanky, slipshod sort of fellow of nineteen or thereabouts. The nurse had run across him begging in a tenement. When she asked him why he did that, he put a question himself: "Where would a fellow beg if not among the poor?" And now there he stood, indifferent, bored if anything, shiftless, yet with some indefinite appeal, waiting to see what I would do. She had told him that he had better go and see me, and he had come. He had done his part; it was up to me now.

He was a waiter, he said, used to working South in the winter, but it was then too late. He had been ill. He suppressed a little hacking cough that told its own story; he was a "lunger." Did he tramp? Yes, he said, and I noticed that his breath smelled of whisky. He made no attempt to hide the fact.

I explained to him that I might send him to some place in the country where he could get better during the winter, but that it would be so much effort wasted if he drank. He considered a while, and nodded in his curious detached way; he guessed he could manage without it, if he had plenty of hot coffee. The upshot of it was that he accepted my condition and went.

Larger Image
"there he stood, indifferent, bored if anything, shiftless."

Along in midwinter our door-bell was rung one night, and there stood Peter. "Oh! did you come back? Too bad!" It slipped out before I had time to think. But Peter bore with me. He smiled reassurance. "I did not run away. The place burned down; we were sent back."

It was true; I remembered. But the taint of whisky was on his breath. "You have been drinking again," I fretted. "You spent your money for that—"

“No,” said he; “a man treated me.”

“And did you have to take whisky?”

There was no trace of resentment in his retort: “Well, now, what would he have said if I’d took milk?” It was as one humoring a child.

He went South on a waiter job. From St. Augustine he sent me a letter that ended: “Write me in care of the post-office; it is the custom of the town to get your letters there.” Likely it was the first time in his life that he had had a mail address. “This is a very nice place,” ran his comment on the old Spanish town, “but for business give me New York.”

The Wanderlust gripped Peter, and I heard from him next in the Southwest. For years letters came from him at long intervals, showing that he had not forgotten me. Once another tramp called on me with greeting from him and a request for shoes. When “business” next took Peter to New York and he called, I told him that I valued his acquaintance, but did not care for that of many more tramps. He knew the man at once.

“Oh,” he said, “isn’t he a rotter? I didn’t think he would do that.”They were tramping in Colorado, he explained, and one night the other man told him of his mother. Peter, in the intimacy of the camp-fire, spoke of me. The revelation of the other’s baseness was like the betrayal of some sacred rite. I would not have liked to be in the man’s place when next they met, if they ever did.

Some months passed, and then one day a message came from St. Joseph’s Home: “I guess I am up against it this time.” He did not want to trouble me, but would I come and say good-by? I went at once. Peter was dying, and he knew it. Sitting by his bed, my mind went back to our first meeting—perhaps his did too—and I said: “You have been real decent several times, Peter. You must have come of good people; don’t you want me to find them for you?” He didn’t seem to care very much, but at last he gave me the address in Boston of his only sister. But she had moved, and it was a long and toilsome task to find her. In the end, however, a friend located her for me. She was a poor Irish dressmaker, and Peter’s old father lived with her. She wrote in answer to my summons that they would come, if Peter wanted them very much, but that it would be a sacrifice. He had always been their great trial—a born tramp and idler.

Peter was chewing a straw when I told him. I had come none too soon. His face told me that. He heard me out in silence. When I asked if he wanted me to send for them, he stopped chewing a while and ruminated.

“They might send me the money instead,” he decided, and resumed his straw.

KATE'S CHOICE

My winter lecture travels sometimes bring me to a town not a thousand miles from New York, where my mail awaits me. If it happens then, as it often does, that it is too heavy for me to attack alone—for it is the law that if a man live by the pen he shall pay the penalty in kind—I send for a stenographer, and in response there comes a knock at my door that ushers in a smiling young woman, who answers my inquiries after "Grandma" with the assurance that she is very well indeed, though she is getting older every day. As to her, I can see for myself that she is fine, and I wonder secretly where the young men's eyes are that she is still Miss Murray. Before I leave town, unless the train table is very awkward, I am sure to call on Grandma for a chat—in office hours, for then the old lady will exhibit to me with unreserved pride "the child's" note-book, with the pothooks which neither of us can make out, and tell me what a wonderful girl she is. And I cry out with the old soul in rapture over it all, and go away feeling happily that the world is all right with two such people in it as Kate Murray and her grandmother, though the one is but a plain stenographer and the other an old Irishwoman, but with the faithful, loving heart of her kind. To me there is no better kind anywhere, and Grandma Linton is the type as she is the flower of it. So that you shall agree with me I will tell you their story, her story and the child's, exactly as they have lived it, except that I will not tell you the name of the town they live in or their own true names, because Kate herself does not know all of it, and it is best that she shall not—yet.

When I say at the very outset that Margaret Linton, Kate's mother, was Margaret Linton all her brief sad life, you know the reason why, and there is no need of saying more. She was a brave, good girl, innocent as she was handsome. At nineteen she was scrubbing offices to save her widowed mother, whom rheumatism had crippled. That was how she met the young man who made love to her, and listened to his false promises, as girls have done since time out of mind to their undoing. She was nineteen when her baby was born. From that day, as long as she lived, no word of reproach fell from her mother's lips. "My Maggie" was more than ever the pride of the widow's heart since the laughter had died in her bonny eyes. It was as if in the fatherless child the strongest of all bonds had come between the two silent women. Poor Margaret closed her eyes with the promise of her mother that she would never forsake her baby, and went to sleep with a tired little sigh.

Kate was three years old when her mother died. It was no time then for Grandma Linton to be bothered with the rheumatics. It was one thing to be a

worn old woman with a big strong daughter to do the chores for you, quite another to have this young life crying out to you for food and shelter and care, a winsome elf putting two plump little arms around one's neck and whispering with her mouth close to your ear, "I love oo, Grannie." With the music of the baby voice in her ears the widow girded up her loins and went out scrubbing, cleaning, became janitress of the tenement in which she and Kate occupied a two-room flat—anything so that the thorns should be plucked from the path of the child's blithesome feet. Seven years she strove for her "lamb." When Kate was ten and getting to be a big girl, she faced the fact that she could do it no longer. She was getting too old.

What struggles it cost, knowing her, I can guess; but she brought that sacrifice too. Friends who were good to the poor undertook to pay the rent. She could earn enough to keep them; that she knew. But they soon heard that the two were starving. Poor neighbors were sharing their meals with them, who themselves had scarce enough to go around; and from Kate's school came the report that she was underfed. Her grandmother's haggard face told the same story plainly. There was still the "county" where no one starves, however else she fares, and they tried to make her see that it was her duty to give up and let the child be cared for in an institution. But against that Grandma Linton set her face like flint. She was her Maggie's own, and stay with her she would, as she had promised, as long as she could get around at all. And with that she reached for her staff—her old enemy, the rheumatics, was just then getting in its worst twinges, as if to mock her—and set out to take up her work.

But it was all a vain pretense, and her friends knew it. They were at their wits' end until it occurred to them to lump two families in one. There was another widow, a younger woman with four small children, the youngest a baby, who was an unsolved problem to them. The mother had work, and was able to do it; but she could not be spared from home as things were. They brought the two women together. They liked one another, and took eagerly to the "club" plan. In the compact that was made Mrs. Linton became the housekeeper of the common home, with five children to care for instead of one, while the mother of the young brood was set free to earn the living for the household.

Mother Linton took up her new and congenial task with the whole-hearted devotion with which she had carried out her promise to Maggie. She mothered the family of untaught children and brought them up as her own. They had been running wild, but grew well-mannered and attractive, to her great pride.

They soon accepted her as their veritable “grannie,” and they call her that to this day.

The years went by, and Kate, out of short skirts, got her “papers” at the school and went forth to learn typewriting. She wanted her own home then, and the partnership which had proved so mutually helpful was dissolved. Kate was getting along well, with steady work in an office, when the great crisis came. Grandma became so feeble that their friends once more urged her removal to an institution, where she could be made comfortable, instead of having to make a home for her granddaughter. When, as before, she refused to hear of it, they tried to bring things to a head by refusing any longer to contribute toward the rent. They did it with fear and trembling, but they did not know those two, after all. The day notice had been given Kate called at the office.

She came to thank her friends for their help in the past. It was all right for them to stop now, she said; it was her turn. “Grandma took care of me when I was a little girl for years; now I can take care of her. I am earning five dollars a week; that is more than when you first helped us, and I shall soon get a raise. Grannie and I will move into other rooms that are not so high up, for the stairs are hard on her. She shall stay with me while she lives and I will mind her.”

She was as good as her word. With her own hands and the aid of every man in the tenement who happened to be about, she moved their belongings to the new home, while the mothers and children cheered her on the way. They live not far from there to-day, year by year more snugly housed, for Kate is earning a stenographer’s pay now. Her employers in the office raised her wages when they heard, through her friends, of Kate’s plucky choice; but that is another thing Kate Murray does not know. Since then she has set up in business for herself. Grandma, as I told you, is still living, getting younger every day, in her adoration of the young woman who moves about her, light-footed and light-hearted, patting her pillow, smoothing her snowy hair, and showing affection for her in a thousand little ways. Sometimes when the young woman sings the old Irish songs that Grandma herself taught the girl’s mother as a child, she looks up with a start, thinking it is her Maggie come back. Then she remembers, and a shadow flits across her kind old face. If Kate sees it, she steals up behind her, and, putting two affectionate arms around her neck, whispers in her ear, “I love oo, Grannie,” and the elder woman laughs and lives again in the blessed present. At such times I wonder how much Kate really does know. But she keeps her own counsel.

Larger Image
“if kate sees it, she steals up behind her, and,
putting two affectionate arms around her neck,
whispers in her ear, ‘i love oo, grannie.’”

THE MOTHER'S HEAVEN

The door-bell of the Nurses' Settlement rang loudly one rainy night, and a Polish Jewess demanded speech with Miss Wald. This was the story she told: She scrubbed halls and stairs in a nice tenement on the East Side. In one of the flats lived the Schaibles, a young couple not long in the country. He was a music teacher. Believing that money was found in the streets of America, they furnished their flat finely on the installment plan, expecting that he would have many pupils, but none came. A baby did instead, and when they were three, what with doctor and nurse, their money went fast. Now it was all gone; the installment collector was about to seize their furniture for failure to pay, and they would lose all. The baby was sick and going to die. It would have to be buried in "the trench," for the father and mother were utterly friendless and penniless.

She told the story dispassionately, as one reciting an every-day event in tenement-house life, until she came to the sick baby. Then her soul was stirred.

"I couldn't take no money out of that house," she said. She gave her day's pay for scrubbing to the poor young couple and came straight to Miss Wald to ask her to send a priest to them. She had little ones herself, and she knew that the mother's heart was grieved because she couldn't meet the baby in her heaven if it died and was buried like a dog.

"'Tain't mine," she added with a little conscious blush at Miss Wald's curious scrutiny; "but it wouldn't be heaven to her without her child, would it?"

They are not Roman Catholics at the Nurses' Settlement, either, as it happens, but they know the way well to the priest's door. Before the night was an hour older a priest was in the home of the young people, and with him came a sister of charity. Save the baby they could not, but keep it from the Potter's Field they could and did. It died, and was buried with all the comforting blessings of the Church, and the poor young parents were no longer friendless. The installment collector, met by Miss Wald in person, ceased to be a terror.

"And to think," said that lady indignantly from behind the coffee urn in the morning, "to think that they don't have a pupil, not a single one!"

The residenters seated at the breakfast table laid down their spoons with a common accord and gazed imploringly at her. They were used to having their heads shampooed for the cause by unskilled hands, to have their dry goods spoiled by tyros at dressmaking, and they knew the signs.

“Leading lady,” they chorused, “oh, leading lady! Have we got to take music lessons?”

WHERE HE FOUND HIS NEIGHBOR

"Go quickly, please, to No. — East Eleventh Street, near the river," was the burden of a message received one day in the Charities Building; "a Hungarian family is in trouble." The little word that covers the widest range in the language gives marching orders daily to many busy feet thereabouts, and, before the October sun had set, a visitor from the Association for the Improvement of the Condition of the Poor had climbed to the fourth floor of the tenement and found the Josefy family. This was what she discovered there: a man in the last stages of consumption, a woman within two weeks of her confinement, five hungry children, a landlord clamoring for his rent. The man had long ceased to earn the family living. His wife, taking up that burden with the rest, had worked on cloaks for a sweater until she also had to give up. In fact, the work gave out just as their need was greatest. Now, with the new baby coming, no preparation had been made to receive it. For those already there, there was no food in the house.

They had once been well off. Josefy was a tailor, and had employed nearly a score of hands in the busy season. He paid forty-four dollars a month rent then. That day the landlord had threatened to dispossess them for one month's arrears of seven dollars, and only because of the rain had given them a day's grace. All the money saved up in better days had gone to pay doctor and druggist, without making Josefy any better. His wife listened dismally to the recital of their troubles and asked for work—any light work that she could do.

The rent was paid, and the baby came. They were eight then, subsisting, as the society's records show, in January on the earnings of Mrs. Josefy making ladies' blouse sleeves at twenty-five cents a dozen pairs, in February on the receipts of embroidering initials on napkins at fifteen cents apiece, in March on her labors in a downtown house on sample cloaks. Three dollars a week was her wage there. To save car-fare she walked to her work and back, a good two miles each way, getting up at a.m. to do her home washing and cleaning first. In bad weather they were poorer by ten cents a day, because then she had to ride. The neighbors were kind; the baker left them bread twice a week and the butcher gave them a little meat now and then. The father's hemorrhages were more frequent. When, on a slippery day, one of the children, going for milk, fell in the street and spilled it, he went without his only food, as they had but eight cents in the house. In May came the end. The tailor died, and in the house of mourning there was one care less, one less to feed and clothe. The widow

gathered her flock close and faced the future dry-eyed. The luxury of grief is not for those at close grips with stern poverty.

When word reached far-off Hungary, Mrs. Josefy's sister wrote to her to come back; she would send the money. The widow's friends rejoiced, but she shook her head. To face poverty as bitter there? This was her children's country; it should be hers too. At the Consulate they reasoned with her; the chance was too good to let pass. When she persisted, they told her to put the children in a home, then; she could never make her way with so many. No doubt they considered her an ungrateful person when she flatly refused to do either. It is not in the record that she ever darkened the door of the Consulate again.

The charitable committee had no better success. They offered her passage money, and she refused it. "She is always looking for work," writes the visitor in the register, for once in her life a little resentfully, it would almost seem. When finally tickets came at the end of a year, Victor, the oldest boy, must finish his schooling first. Exasperated, the committee issues its ultimatum: she must go, or put the children away. Dry bread was the family fare when Mrs. Josefy was confronted with it, but she met it as firmly: Never! she would stay and do the best she could.

The record which I have followed states here that the committee dropped her, but stood by to watch the struggle, half shamefacedly one cannot help thinking, though they had given the best advice they knew. Six months later the widow reports that "the children had never wanted something to eat."

At this time Victor is offered a job, two dollars and a half a week, with a chance of advancement. The mother goes out house-cleaning. Together they live on bread and coffee to save money for the rent, but she refuses the proffered relief. Victor is in the graduating class; he must finish his schooling. Just then her sewing-machine is seized for debt. The committee, retreating in a huff after a fresh defeat over the emigration question, hastens to the rescue, glad of a chance, and it is restored. In sheer admiration at her pluck they put it down that "she is doing the best she can to keep her family together." There is a curious little entry here that sizes up the children. They had sent them to Coney Island on a vacation, but at night they were back home. "No one spoke to them there," is their explanation. They had their mother's pride.

It happened in the last month of that year that I went out to speak in a suburban New Jersey town. "Neighbors" was my topic. I was the guest of the

secretary of a Foreign Mission Board that has its office in the Presbyterian Building on Fifth Avenue. That night when we sat at dinner the talk ran on the modern methods of organized charity. “Yes,” said my host, as his eyes rested on the quiverful seated around the board, “it is all good. But best of all would be if you could find for me a widow, say, with children like my own, whom my wife could help in her own way, and the children learn to take an interest in. I have no chance, as you know. The office claims all my time. But they—that would be best of all, for them and for us.”

And he was right; that would be charity in the real meaning of the word: friendship, the neighborly lift that gets one over the hard places in the road. The other half would cease to be, on that plan, and we should all be one great whole, pulling together, and our democracy would become real. I promised to find him such a widow.

But it proved a harder task than I had thought. None of the widows I knew had six children. The charitable societies had no family that fitted my friend’s case. But in time I found people who knew about Mrs. Josefy. The children were right—so many boys and so many girls; what they told me of the mother made me want to know more. I went over to East Eleventh Street at once. On the way the feeling grew upon me that I had found my friend’s Christmas present—I forgot to say that it was on Christmas Eve—and when I saw them and gathered something of the fight that splendid little woman had waged for her brood those eight long years, I knew that my search was over. When we had set up a Christmas tree together, to the wild delight of the children, and I had ordered a good dinner from a neighboring restaurant on my friend’s account, I hastened back to tell him of my good luck and his. I knew he was late at the office with his mail.

Larger Image
“when we had set up a christmas tree together,
to the wild delight of the children.”
Half-way across town it came to me with a sense of shock that I had forgotten something. Mrs. Josefy had told me that she scrubbed in a public building, but where I had not asked. Perhaps it would not have seemed important to you. It did to me, and when I had gone all the way back and she answered my question, I knew why. Where do you suppose she scrubbed? In the Presbyterian Building! Under his own roof was the neighbor he sought. Almost they touched elbows, yet were they farther apart than the poles. Were, but no longer to be. The very next day brought my friend and his wife in from their

Jersey home to East Eleventh Street. Long years after I found this entry on the register, under date January , :

“Mrs. Josefy states that she never had such a happy Christmas since she came to this country. The children were all so happy, and every one had been so kind to them.”

It was the beginning of better days for the Josefy family. Weary stretches of hard road there were ahead yet, but they were no longer lonesome. The ladies’ committee that had once so hotly blamed her were her friends to the last woman, for she had taught them with her splendid pluck what it should mean to be a mother of Americans. They did not offer to carry her then any more than before, but they went alongside with words of neighborly cheer and saw her win over every obstacle. Two years later finds her still working in the Presbyterian Building earning sixteen dollars a month and leaving her home at five in the morning. Her oldest boy is making four dollars and a half a week, and one of the girls is learning dressmaking. The others are all in school. One may be sure without asking that they are not laggards there. When the youngest, at twelve, is wanted by her friends of the mission board to “live out” with them, the mother refuses to let her go, at the risk of displeasing her benefactors. The child must go to school and learn a trade. Three years more, and all but the youngest are employed. Mrs. Josefy has had a long illness, but she reports that she can help herself. They are now paying fourteen dollars a month rent. On April , , the last entry but one is made on the register: the family is on dry ground and the “case is closed.”

The last but one. That one was added after a gap of eight years when I made inquiries for the Josefys the other day. Eight years is a long time in the Charities Buildings with a heavy burden of human woe and failure. Perhaps for that very reason they had not forgotten Mrs. Josefy, but they had lost trace of her. She had left her old home in Eleventh Street, and all that was known was that she was somewhere up near Fort Washington. I asked that they find her for me, and a week later I read this entry in the register, where, let us hope, the case of the Josefys is now closed for all time:

“The Josefys live now at No. — West One Hundred and Eighty —st Street in a handsome flat of six sunny rooms. The oldest son, who is a cashier in a broker’s office on a salary of $ a week, is the head of the family. His brother earns $ a week in a downtown business. Two of the daughters are happily married; another is a stenographer. The youngest, the baby of the dark days in

the East Side tenement, was graduated from school last year and is ready to join the army of workers. The mother begins to feel her years, but is happy with her children."

Some Christmas Eve I will go up and see them and take my friend from the Presbyterian Building along.

This is the story of a poor woman, daughter of a proud and chivalrous people, whose sons have helped make great fortunes grow in our land and have received scant pay and scantier justice in return, and of whom it is the custom of some Americans to speak with contempt as "Huns."

WHAT THE SNOWFLAKE TOLD

The first snowflake was wafted in upon the north wind to-day. I stood in my study door and watched it fall and disappear; but I knew that many would come after and hide my garden from sight ere long. What will the winter bring us? When they wake once more, the flowers that now sleep snugly under their blanket of dead leaves, what shall we have to tell?

The postman has just brought me a letter, and with it lying open before me, my thoughts wandered back to "the hard winter" of a half-score seasons ago which none of us has forgotten, when women and children starved in cold garrets while men roamed gaunt and hollow-eyed vainly seeking work. I saw the poor tenement in Rivington Street where a cobbler and his boy were fighting starvation all alone save for an occasional visit from one of Miss Wald's nurses who kept a watchful eye on them as on so many another tottering near the edge in that perilous time, ready with the lift that brought back hope when all things seemed at an end. One day she found a stranger in the flat, a man with close-cropped hair and a hard look that told their own story. The cobbler eyed her uneasily, and, when she went, followed her out and made excuses. Yes! he was just out of prison and had come to him for shelter. He used to know him in other days, and Jim was not—

She interrupted him and shook her head. Was it good for the boy to have that kind of a man in the house?

The cobbler looked at her thoughtfully and touched her arm gently.

"This," he said, "ain't no winter to let a feller from Sing Sing be on the street."

The letter the postman brought made me see all this and more in the snowflake that fell and melted in my garden. It came from a friend in the far West, a gentle, high-bred lady, and told me this story: Her sister, who devotes her life to helping the neighbor, had just been on a visit to her home. One day my friend noticed her wearing an odd knitted shawl, and spoke of it.

"Yes," said she, "that is the shawl the cook gave me."

"The cook?" with lifted eyebrows, I suppose. And then she heard how.

One day, going through the kitchen of the institution where she teaches, she had seen the cook in tears and inquired the cause. The poor woman sobbed out that her daughter had come home to die. The doctors had said that she might live perhaps ten days, no longer, and early and late she cried for her mother to be with her. But she had vainly tried every way to get a cook to take her place—there was none, and her child was dying in the hospital.

"And I told her to go to her right away, I would see to that; that was all," concluded my friend's sister; "and she gave me this shawl when she came back, and I took it, of course. She had worked it for the daughter that died."

But it was not all. For during ten days of sweltering July heat that gentle, delicate woman herself superintended the kitchen, did the cooking, and took the place of the mother who was soothing her dying child's brow, and no one knew it. Not here, that is. No doubt it is known, with a hundred such daily happenings that make the real story of human life, where that record is kept and cherished.

And clear across the continent it comes to solve a riddle that had puzzled me. Recently I had long arguments with a friend about religion and dogmas that didn't help either of us. At the end of three weeks we were farther apart than when we began, and the arguments had grown into controversy that made us both unhappy. We had to have a regular treaty of peace to get over it. I know why now. The snowflake and my friend's letter told me. Those two, the cobbler and the woman, were real Christians. They had the secret. They knew the neighbor, if neither had ever heard of dogma or creed. Our arguments were worse than wasted, though we both meant well, for we were nearer neighbors when we began than when we left off.

I am not learned in such things. Perhaps I am wrong. No doubt dogmas are useful—to wrap things in—but even then I would not tuck in the ends, lest we hide the neighbor so that we cannot see him. After all, it is what is in the package that counts. To me it is the evidence of such as these that God lives in human hearts—that we are molded in his image despite flaws and failures in the casting—that keeps alive the belief that we shall wake with the flowers to a fairer spring. Is it not so with all of us?

THE CITY'S HEART

"Bosh!" said my friend, jabbing impatiently with his stick at a gaunt cat in the gutter, "all bosh! A city has no heart. It's incorporated selfishness; has to be. Slopping over is not business. City is all business. A poet's dream, my good fellow; pretty but moonshine!"

We turned the corner of the tenement street as he spoke. The placid river was before us, with the moonlight upon it. Far as the eye reached, up and down the stream, the shores lay outlined by rows of electric lamps, like strings of shining pearls; red lights and green fights moved upon the water. From a roofed-over pier near by came the joyous shouts of troops of children, and the rhythmic tramp of many feet to the strains of "Could you be true to eyes of blue if you looked into eyes of brown?" A "play-pier" in evening session.

I looked at my friend. He stood gazing out over the river, hat in hand, the gentle sea-breeze caressing the lock at his temple that is turning gray. Something he started to say had died on his lips. He was listening to the laughter of the children. What thoughts of days long gone, before the office and the market reports shut youth and sunshine out of his life, came to soften the hard lines in his face, I do not know. As I watched, the music on the pier died away in a great hush. The river with its lights was gone; my friend was gone. The years were gone with their burden. The world was young once more.

I was in a court-room full of men with pale, stern faces. I saw a child brought in, carried in a horse-blanket, at the sight of which men wept aloud. I saw it laid at the feet of the judge, who turned his face away, and in the stillness of that court-room I heard a voice raised claiming for the human child the protection men had denied it, in the name of the homeless cur of the street. And I heard the story of little Mary Ellen told again, that stirred the souls of a city and roused the conscience of a world that had forgotten. The sweet-faced missionary who found Mary Ellen was there, wife of a newspaper man—happy augury; where the gospel of faith and the gospel of facts join hands the world moves. She told how the poor consumptive in the dark slum tenement, at whose bedside she daily read the Bible, could not die in peace while "the child they called Mary Ellen" was beaten and tortured in the next flat; and how on weary feet she went from door to door of the powerful, vainly begging mercy for it and peace for her dying friend. The police told her to furnish evidence, prove

crime, or they could not move; the societies said: “bring the child to us legally, and we will see; till then we can do nothing”; the charitable said, “it is dangerous to interfere between parent and child; better let it alone.” And the judges said that it was even so; it was for them to see that men walked in the way laid down, not to find it—until her woman’s heart rebelled in anger against it all, and she sought the great friend of the dumb brute, who made a way.

“The child is an animal,” he said. “If there is no justice for it as a human being, it shall at least have the rights of the cur in the street. It shall not be abused.”

And as I looked I knew that I was where the first charter of the Children’s rights was written under warrant of that made for the dog; for from that dingy court-room, whence a wicked woman went to jail, thirty years ago came forth the Children’s Society, with all it has meant to the world’s life. It is quickening its pulse to this day in lands and among peoples who never spoke the name of my city and Mary Ellen’s. For her—her life has run since like an even summer stream between flowery shores. When last I had news of her, she was the happy wife of a prosperous farmer up-State.

The lights on the river shone out once more. From the pier came a chorus of children’s voices singing “Sunday Afternoon” as only East Side children can. My friend was listening intently. Aye, well did I remember the wail that came to the Police Board, in the days that are gone, from a pastor over there. “The children disturb our worship,” he wrote; “they gather in the street at my church and sing and play while we would pray”; and the bitter retort of the police captain of the precinct: “They have no other place to play; better pray for sense to help them get one.” I saw him the other day—the preacher—singing to the children in the tenement street and giving them flowers; and I knew that the day of sense and of charity had swept him with it.

The present is swallowed up again, and there rises before me the wraith of a village church in the far-off mountains of Pennsylvania. It is Sunday morning at midsummer. In the pulpit a young clergyman is preaching from the text: “Inasmuch as ye did it unto one of these my brethren, even the least, ye did it unto me.” The sun peeps through the windows, where climbing roses nod. In the tall maples a dove is cooing; the drowsy hum of the honey-bee is on the air. But he recks not of these, nor of the peaceful day. His soul has seen a vision of hot and stony streets, of squalid homes, of hard-visaged, unlovely childhood, of mankind made in His image twisted by want and ignorance into monstrous

deformity: and the message he speaks goes straight to the heart of the plain farmers on the benches; His brethren these, and steeped in the slum! They gather round him after the service, their hearts burning within them.

I see him speeding the next day toward the great city, a messenger of love and pity and help. I see him return before the week's end, nine starved urchins clinging to his hands and the skirts of his coat, the first Fresh Air party that went out of New York twoscore years ago. I see the big-hearted farmers take them into their homes and hearts. I see the sun and the summer wind put back color in the wan cheek, and life in the shrunken and starved frame. I hear the message of one of the little ones to her chums left behind in the tenement: "I can have two pieces of pie to eat, and nobody says nothing if I take three pieces of cake"; and I know what it means to them. Laugh? Yes! laugh and be glad. The world has sorrow enough. Let in the sunshine where you can, and know that it means life to these, life now and a glimpse of the hereafter. I can hear it yet, the sigh of the tired mother under the trees on Twin Island, our Henry-street children's summer home: "If heaven is like this, I don't care how soon I go."

For the sermon had wings; and whithersoever it went blessings sprang in its track. Love and justice grew; men read the brotherhood into the sunlight and the fields and the woods, and the brotherhood became real. I see the minister, no longer so young, sitting in his office in the "Tribune" building, still planning Fresh Air holidays for the children of the hot, stony city. But he seeks them himself no more. A thousand churches, charities, kindergartens, settlements, a thousand preachers and doers of the brotherhood, gather them in. A thousand trains of many crowded cars carry them to the homes that are waiting for them wherever men and women with warm hearts live. The message has traveled to the farthest shores, and nowhere in the Christian world is there a place where it has not been heard and heeded. Wherever it has, there you have seen the heart of man laid bare; and the sight is good.

"'Way—down—yonder—in—the—corn-field," brayed the band, and the shrill chorus took up the words. At last they meant something to them. It was worth living in the day that taught that lesson to the children of the tenements. Other visions, new scenes, came trooping by on the refrain: the farm-homes far and near where they found, as the years passed and the new love grew and warmed the hearts, that they had entertained angels unawares; the host of boys and girls, greater than would people a city, that have gone out to take with the old folks the place of the lads who would not stay on the land, and have grown up

sturdy men and women, good citizens, governors of States some of them, cheating the slum of its due; the floating hospitals that carry their cargoes of white and helpless little sufferers down the bay in the hot summer days, and bring them back at night sitting bolt upright at the supper-table and hammering it with their spoons, shouting for more; the new day that shines through the windows of our school-houses, dispelling the nightmare of dry-as-dust pedagoguery, and plants brass-bands upon the roof of the school, where the children dance and are happy under the stars; that builds play-piers and neighborhood parks in which never a sign "Keep off the Grass" shall stand to their undoing; that grows school-gardens in the steps of the kindergarten, makes truck-farmers on city lots of the toughs they would have bred, lying waste; that strikes the fetters of slavery from childhood in home and workshop, and breaks the way for a better to-morrow. Happy vision of a happy day that came in with the tears of little Mary Ellen. Truly they were not shed in vain.

There was a pause in the play on the pier. Then the strains of "America" floated down to us where we stood.

"Long may our land be bright
With Freedom's holy light,"

came loud and clear in the childish voices. They knew it by heart, and no wonder. To their fathers, freedom was but an empty name, a mockery. My friend stood bareheaded till the last line was sung:

"Great God, our King!"

then he put on his hat and nodded to me to come. We walked away in silence. To him, too, there had come in that hour the vision of the heart of the great city; and before it he was dumb.

CHIPS FROM THE MAELSTROM

It is a good many years since I ran across the Murphy family while hunting up a murder, in the old Mulberry Street days. That was not their name, but no matter; it was one just as good. Their home was in Poverty Gap, and I have seldom seen a worse. The man was a wife-beater when drunk, which he was whenever he had "the price." Hard work and hard knocks had made a wreck of his wife. The five children, two of them girls, were growing up as they could, which was not as they should, but according to the way of Poverty Gap: in the gutter.

We took them and moved them across town from the West Side to be nearer us, for it was a case where to be neighbor one had to stand close. As another step, I had the man taken up and sent to the Island. He came home the next week, and before the sun set on another day had run his family to earth. We found one of the boys bringing beer in a can and Mr. Murphy having a good time on the money we had laid away against the landlord's call. Mrs. Murphy was nursing a black eye at the sink. She had done her best, but she was fighting against fate.

So it seemed; for as the years went by, though he sometimes stayed out his month on the Island—more often, especially if near election time, he was back the next or even the same day—and though we moved the family into every unlikely neighborhood we could think of, always he found them out and celebrated his return home by beating his wife and chasing the children out to buy beer, the girls, as they grew up, to earn in the street the money for his debauches. I had talked the matter over with the Chief of Police, who was interested on the human side, and we had agreed that there was no other way than to eliminate Mr. Murphy. All benevolent schemes of reforming him were preposterous. So, between us, we sent him to jail nineteen times. He did not always get there. Once he was back before he could have reached the Island ferry; we never knew how. Another time, when the doorman at the police station was locking him up, he managed to get on the free side of the door, and, drunk as he was, slammed it on the policeman and locked him in. Then he sat down outside, lighted his pipe and cracked jokes at the helpless anger of his prisoner. Murphy was a humorist in his way. Had he also been a poet he might have secured his discharge as did his chum on the Island who delivered himself thus in his own defense before the police judge:

"Leaves have their time to fall,

And so likewise have I.
The reason, too, is the same,
It comes of getting dry.
The difference 'twixt leaves and me—
I fall more harder and more frequently."

But Murphy was no poet, and his sense of humor was of a kind too fraught with peril to life and limb. When he was arraigned the nineteenth time, the judge in the Essex Market Court lost patience when I tried to persuade him to break the Island routine and hold the man for the Special Sessions, and ordered me sternly to "Stand down, sir! This court is not to be dictated to by anybody." I had to remind his Honor that unless he could be persuaded to deal rationally with Mr. Murphy the court might yet come to be charged before the Grand Jury with being accessory to wife murder, for assuredly it was coming to that. It helped, and Murphy's case was considered in Sessions, where a sentence of two years and a half was imposed upon him. While serving it he died.

The children had meanwhile grown into young men and women. The first summer, when we sent the two girls to a clergyman's family in the country, they stole some rings and came near wrecking all our plans. But those good people had sense, and saw that the children stole as a magpie steals—the gold looked good to them. They kept them, and they have since grown into good women. To be sure, it was like a job of original creation. They had to be built, morally and intellectually, from the ground up. But in the end we beat Poverty Gap. The boys? That was a harder fight, for the gutter had its grip on them. But we pulled them out. At all events, they did better than their father. When they were fifteen they wore neckties, which in itself was a challenge to the traditions of the Gap. I don't think I ever saw Mr. Murphy with one, or a collar either. They will never be college professors, but they promised fair to be honest workingmen, which was much.

What to do with the mother was a sore puzzle for a while. She could not hold a flat-iron in her hand; didn't know which end came first. She could scrub, and we began at that. With infinite patience, she was taught washing and ironing, and between visits from her rascal husband began to make out well. For she was industrious, and, with hope reviving, life took on some dignity, inconceivable in her old setting. In spite of all his cruelty she never wholly cast off her husband. He was still to her Mr. Murphy, the head of the house, if by chance he were to be caught out sober; but the chance never befell. It was

right that he should be locked up, but outside of these official relations of his, as it were, with society, she had no criticism to make upon him. Only once, when he dropped a note showing that he had been carrying on a flirtation with a "scrub" on the Island, did she exhibit any resentment. Mrs. Murphy was jealous; that is, she was human.

Through all the years of his abuse, with the instinct of her race, she had managed to keep up an insurance on his life that would give him a decent burial. And when he lay dead at last she spent it all—more than a hundred and fifty dollars—on a wake over the fellow, all except a small sum which she reserved for her own adornment in his honor. She came over to the Settlement to consult our head worker as to the proprieties of the thing: should she wear mourning earrings in his memory?

Such is the plain record of the Murphy family, one of the oldest on our books in Henry Street. Over against it let me set one of much more recent date, and let them tell their own story.

Our gardener, when he came to dig up from their winter bed by the back fence the privet shrubs that grow on our roof garden in summer, reported that one was missing. It was not a great loss, and we thought no more about it, till one day one of our kindergarten workers came tiptoeing in and beckoned us out on the roof. Way down in the depth of the tenement-house yard back of us, where the ice lay in a grimy crust long after the spring flowers had begun to peep out in our garden above, grew our missing shrub. A piece of ground, yard-wide, had been cleared of rubbish and dug over. In the middle of the plot stood the privet shrub, trimmed to make it impersonate a young tree. A fence had been built about it with lath, and the whole thing had quite a festive look. A little lad was watering and tending the "garden." He looked up and saw us and nodded with perfect frankness. He was Italian, by the looks of him.

One of our workers went around in Madison Street to invite him to the Settlement, where we would give him all the flowers he wanted.

"But come by the front door, not over the back fence," was the message she bore, and he said he would. He made no bones of having raided our yard. He wanted the "tree" and took it. But he didn't come. It was a long way round; his was more direct. This spring the same worker caught him climbing the back fence once more, and this time trying to drag back with him a whole window-box. She was just in time to pull it back on our side. He let go his grip without

resentment. It was the fate of war; that time we won. We renewed our invitation after that, and, when he didn't respond, sent him four blossoming geraniums with the friendly regards of a neighbor who bore no grudge. For in our social creed the longing for a flower in the child-heart covers a maze of mischief; and a maze it is always with the boys. No wonder we feel that way. Our work, all of it, sprang from that longing and was built upon it. But that is another story.

The other day I looked down and saw our flowers blooming there, but with a discouraged look I could make out even from that height. Still no news from their owner. A little girl with blue ribbons in her hair was watering them. I went around and struck up an acquaintance with her. Mike was in the country, she said, on Long Island, where his sister was married. She, too, was his sister. Her name was Rose, and a sweet little rose she did look like in all the litter of that tenement yard. It was for her Mike had made the garden and had built the summer-house which she and her friends furnished. She took me to it, in the corner of the garden. You could just put your head in; but it was worth while. The walls, made of old boxes and boards, had been papered with colored supplements. The "Last Supper" was there, and some bird pictures, a snipe and a wood-duck with a wholesome suggestion of outdoors; on a nicely papered shelf some shining bits of broken crockery to finish things off. A doll's bed and chair furnished one-half of the "house," a wobbly parlor chair the other half. The initials of the four girl friends were written in blue chalk over the door.

The "garden" was one step across, two the long way. I saw at a glance why the geraniums drooped, with leaves turning yellow. She had taken them out of the pots and set them right on top of the ground.

"But that isn't the way," I said, and rolled up my sleeves to show her how to plant a flower. I shall not soon get the smell of that sour soil out of my nostrils and my memory. It welled up with a thousand foul imaginings of the gutter the minute I dug into it with the lath she gave me for a spade. Inwardly I resolved that before summer came again there should be a barrel of the sweet wholesome earth from my own Long Island garden in that back yard, in which a rosebush might live. But the sun?

"Does it ever come here?" I asked, doubtfully glancing up at the frowning walls that hedged us in.

"Every evening it comes for a little while," she said cheerfully. It must be a little while indeed, in that den. She showed me a straggling green thing with no

leaves. “That is a potato,” she said, “and this is a bean. That’s the way they grow.” The bean was trying feebly to climb a string to the waste-pipe that crossed the “garden” and burrowed in it. Between the shell-paved walk and the wall was a border two hands wide where there was nothing.

“There used to be grass there,” she said, “but the cats ate it.” On the wall above it was chalked the inevitable “Keep off the Grass.” They had done their best.

Three or four plants with no traditional prejudices as to soil grew in one corner. “Mike found the seed of them,” she said simply. I glanced at the back fence and guessed where.

She was carrying water from the hydrant when I went out. “They’re good people,” said the old housekeeper, who had come out to see what the strange man was there for. On the stoop sat an old grandfather with a child in his lap.

“It is the way of ’em,” he said. “I asked this one,” patting the child affectionately, “what she wanted for her birthday. ‘Gran’pa,’ she said, ‘I want a flower.’ Now did ye ever hear such a dern little fool?” and he smoothed her tangled head. But I saw that he understood.

Chips from the maelstrom that swirls ever in our great city. We stand on the shore and pull in such wrecks as we may. I set them down here without comment, without theory. For it is not theory that in the last going over we are brothers, being children of one Father. Hence our real heredity is this, that we are children of God. Hence, also, our fight upon the environment that would smother instincts proclaiming our birthright is the great human issue, the real fight for freedom, in all days.

And Murphy, says my carping friend, where does he come in? He does not come in; unless it be that the love and loyalty of his wife which not all his cruelty could destroy, and the inhumanity of Poverty Gap, plead for him that another chance may be given the man in him. Who knows?

HEARTSEASE

In a mean street, over on the West Side, I came across a doorway that bore upon its plate the word "Heartsease." The house was as mean as the street. It was flanked on one side by a jail, on the other by a big stable barrack. In front, right under the windows, ran the elevated trains, so close that to open the windows was impossible, for the noise and dirt. Back of it they were putting up a building which, when completed, would hug the rear wall so that you couldn't open the windows there at all.

After nightfall you would have found in that house two frail little women. One of them taught school by day in the outlying districts of the city, miles and miles away, across the East River. By night she came there to sleep, and to be near her neighbors.

And who were these neighbors? Drunken, dissolute women, vile brothels and viler saloons, for the saloon trafficked in the vice of the other. Those who lived there were Northfield graduates, girls of refinement and modesty. Yet these were the neighbors they had chosen for their own. At all hours of the night the bell would ring, and they would come, sometimes attended by policemen. Said one of these:

"We have this case. She isn't wanted in this home, or in that institution. She doesn't come under their rules. We thought you might stretch yours to take her in. Else she goes straight to the devil."

Yes! that was what he said. And she: "Bless you; we have no rules. Let her come in." And she took her and put her to bed.

In the midnight hour my friend of Heartsease hears of a young girl, evidently a new-comer, whom the brothel or the saloon has in its clutch, and she gets out of bed, and, going after her, demands her sister, and gets her out from the very jaws of hell. Again, on a winter's night, a drunken woman finds her way to her door—a married woman with a husband and children. And she gets out of her warm bed again, and, when the other is herself, takes her home, never leaving her till she is safe.

I found her papering the walls and painting the floor in her room. I said to her that I did not think you could do anything with those women,—and neither can

you, if they are just “those women” to you. Jesus could. One came and sat at his feet and wept, and dried them with her hair.

“Oh,” said she, “it isn’t so! They come, and are glad to stay. I don’t know that they are finally saved, that they never fall again. But here, anyhow, we have given them a resting spell and time to think. And plenty turn good.”

She told me of a girl brought in by her brother as incorrigible. No one knew what to do with her. She stayed in that atmosphere of affection three months, and went forth to service. That was nearly half a year before, and she had “stayed good.” A chorus girl lived twelve years with a man, who then cast her off. Heartsease sent her out a domestic, at ten dollars a month, and she, too, “stayed good.”

“I don’t consider,” said the woman of Heartsease, simply, “that we are doing it right, but we will yet.”

I looked at her, the frail girl with this unshaken, unshakable faith in the right, and asked her, not where she got her faith—I knew that—but where she got the money to run the house. Alas, for poor human nature that will not accept the promise that “all these things shall be added unto you!” She laughed.

“The rent is pledged by half a dozen friends. The rest—comes.”

“But how?”

She pointed to a lot of circulars, painfully written out in the night watches.

“We are selling soap just now,” she said; “but it is not always soap. Here,” patting a chair, “this is Larkin’s soap; that chafing-dish is green stamps; this set of dishes is Mother’s Oats. We write to the people, you see, and they buy the things, and we get the prizes. We’ve furnished the house in that way. And some give us money. A man offered to give an entertainment, promising to give us $ of the receipts. And then the Charity Organization Society warned us against him, and we had to give up the $,” with a sigh. But she brightened up in a moment: “The very next day we got $ for our building fund. We shall have to move some day.”

The elevated train swept by the window with rattle and roar. You could have touched it, so close did it run. “I won’t let it worry me,” she said, with her brave little smile.

I listened to the crash of the vanishing train, and looked at the mean surroundings, and my thoughts wandered to the great school in the Massachusetts hills—her school—which I had passed only the day before. It lay there beautiful in the spring sunlight. But something better than its sunlight and its green hills had come down here to bear witness to the faith which the founder of Northfield preached all his life,—this woman who was a neighbor.

I forgot to ask in what special church fold she belonged. It didn’t seem to matter. I know that my friend, Sister Irene, who picked the outcast waifs from the gutter where they perished till she came, was a Roman Catholic, and that they both had sat at the feet of Him who is all compassion, and had learned the answer there to the question that awaits us at the end of our journey:

“‘I showed men God,’ my Lord will say,
‘As I traveled along the King’s highway.
I eased the sister’s troubled mind;
I helped the blighted to be resigned;
I showed the sky to the souls grown blind.
And what did you?’ my Lord will say,
When we meet at the end of the King’s highway.”

HIS CHRISTMAS GIFT

"The prisoner will stand," droned out the clerk in the Court of General Sessions. "Filippo Portoghese, you are convicted of assault with intent to kill. Have you anything to say why sentence should not be passed upon you?"

A sallow man with a hopeless look in his heavy eyes rose slowly in his seat and stood facing the judge. There was a pause in the hum and bustle of the court as men turned to watch the prisoner. He did not look like a man who would take a neighbor's life, and yet so nearly had he done so, of set purpose it had been abundantly proved, that his victim would carry the disfiguring scar of the bullet to the end of his life, and only by what seemed an almost miraculous chance had escaped death. The story as told by witnesses and substantially uncontradicted was this:

Portoghese and Vito Ammella, whom he shot, were neighbors under the same roof. Ammella kept the grocery on the ground floor. Portoghese lived upstairs in the tenement. He was a prosperous, peaceful man, with a family of bright children, with whom he romped and played happily when home from his barber shop. The Black Hand fixed its evil eye upon the family group and saw its chance. One day a letter came demanding a thousand dollars. Portoghese put it aside with the comment that this was New York, not Italy. Other letters followed, threatening harm to his children. Portoghese paid no attention, but his wife worried. One day the baby, little Vito, was missing, and in hysterics she ran to her husband's shop crying that the Black Hand had stolen the child.

The barber hurried home and sought high and low. At last he came upon the child sitting on Ammella's doorstep; he had wandered away and brought up at the grocery; asked where he had been, the child pointed to the store. Portoghese flew in and demanded to know what Ammella was doing with his boy. The grocer was in a bad humor, and swore at him. There was an altercation, and Ammella attacked the barber with a broom, beating him and driving him away from his door. Black with anger, Portoghese ran to his room and returned with a revolver. In the fight that followed he shot Ammella through the head.

He was arrested and thrown into jail. In the hospital the grocer hovered between life and death for many weeks. Portoghese lay in the Tombs awaiting trial for more than a year, believing still that he was the victim of a Black Hand conspiracy. When at last the trial came on, his savings were all gone, and of

the once prosperous and happy man only a shadow was left. He sat in the court-room and listened in moody silence to the witnesses who told how he had unjustly suspected and nearly murdered his friend. He was speedily convicted, and the day of his sentence was fixed for Christmas Eve. It was certain that it would go hard with him. The Italians were too prone to shoot and stab, said the newspapers, and the judges were showing no mercy.

The witnesses had told the truth, but there were some things they did not know and that did not get into the evidence. The prisoner's wife was ill from grief and want; their savings of years gone to lawyer's fees, they were on the verge of starvation. The children were hungry. With the bells ringing in the glad holiday, they were facing bitter homelessness in the winter streets, for the rent was in arrears and the landlord would not wait. And "Papa" away now for the second Christmas, and maybe for many yet to come! Ten, the lawyer and jury had said: this was New York, not Italy. In the Tombs the prisoner said it over to himself, bitterly. He had thought only of defending his own.

So now he stood looking the judge and the jury in the face, yet hardly seeing them. He saw only the prison gates opening for him, and the gray walls shutting him out from his wife and little ones for—how many Christmases was it? One, two, three—he fell to counting them over mentally and did not hear when his lawyer whispered and nudged him with his elbow. The clerk repeated his question, but he merely shook his head. What should he have to say? Had he not said it to these men and they did not believe him? About little Vito who was lost, and his wife who cried her eyes out because of the Black Hand letters. He—

There was a step behind him, and a voice he knew spoke. It was the voice of Ammella, his neighbor, with whom he used to be friends before—before that day.

Larger Image
"please, your honor, let this man go! it is christmas."

"Please, your Honor, let this man go! It is Christmas, and we should have no unkind thoughts. I have none against Filippo here, and I ask you to let him go."

It grew very still in the court-room as he spoke and paused for an answer. Lawyers looked up from their briefs in astonishment. The jurymen in the box leaned forward and regarded the convicted man and his victim with rapt

attention. Such a plea had not been heard in that place before. Portoghese stood mute; the voice sounded strange and far away to him. He felt a hand upon his shoulder that was the hand of a friend, and shifted his feet uncertainly, but made no response. The gray-haired judge regarded the two gravely but kindly.

"Your wish comes from a kind heart," he said. "But this man has been convicted. The law must be obeyed. There is nothing in it that allows us to let a guilty man go free."

The jurymen whispered together and one of them arose.

"Your Honor," he said, "a higher law than any made by man came into the world at Christmas—that we love one another. These men would obey it. Will you not let them? The jury pray as one man that you let mercy go before justice on this Holy Eve."

A smile lit up Judge O'Sullivan's face. "Filippo Portoghese," he said, "you are a very fortunate man. The law bids me send you to prison for ten years, and but for a miraculous chance would have condemned you to death. But the man you maimed for life pleads for you, and the jury that convicted you begs that you go free. The Court remembers what you have suffered and it knows the plight of your family, upon whom the heaviest burden of your punishment would fall. Go, then, to your home. And to you, gentlemen, a happy holiday such as you have given him and his! This court stands adjourned."

The voice of the crier was lost in a storm of applause. The jury rose to their feet and cheered judge, complainant, and defendant. Portoghese, who had stood as one dazed, raised eyes that brimmed with tears to the bench and to his old neighbor. He understood at last. Ammella threw his arm around him and kissed him on both cheeks, his disfigured face beaming with joy. One of the jurymen, a Jew, put his hand impulsively in his pocket, emptied it into his hat, and passed the hat to his neighbor. All the others followed his example. The court officer dropped in half a dollar as he stuffed its contents into the happy Italian's pocket. "For little Vito," he said, and shook his hand.

"Ah!" said the foreman of the jury, looking after the reunited friends leaving the court-room arm in arm; "it is good to live in New York. A merry Christmas to you, Judge!

OUR ROOF GARDEN AMONG THE TENEMENTS

A year has gone since we built a roof garden on top of the gymnasium that took away our children's playground by filling up the yard. In many ways it has been the hardest of all the years we have lived through with our poor neighbors. Poverty, illness, misrepresentation, and the hottest and hardest of all summers for those who must live in the city's crowds—they have all borne their share. But to the blackest cloud there is somewhere a silver lining if you look long enough and hard enough for it, and ours has been that roof garden. It is not a very great affair— some of you readers would smile at it, I suppose. There are no palm trees and no "pergola," just a plain roof down in a kind of well with tall tenements all about. Two big barrels close to the wall tell their own story of how the world is growing up toward the light. For they once held whisky and trouble and deviltry; now they are filled with fresh, sweet earth, and beautiful Japanese ivy grows out of them and clings lovingly to the wall of our house, spreading its soft, green tendrils farther and farther each season, undismayed by the winter's cold. And then boxes and boxes on a brick parapet, with hardy Golden Glow, scarlet geraniums, California privet, and even a venturesome Crimson Rambler.

When first we got window boxes and filled them with the ivy that looks so pretty and is seen so far, every child in the block accepted it as an invitation to help himself when and how he could. They never touch it nowadays. They like it too much. We didn't have to tell them. They do it themselves. When this summer it became necessary on account of the crowd to eliminate the husky boys from the roof garden and we gave them the gym instead to romp in, they insisted on paying their way. Free on the roof was one thing; this was quite another. They taxed themselves two cents a week, one for the house, one for the club treasury, and they passed this resolution that "any boy wot shoots craps or swears, or makes a row in the house or is disrespectful to Mr. Smith or runs with any crooks, is put out of the club." They were persuaded to fine the offender a cent instead of expelling him, and it worked all right except with Sammy, who arose to dispute the equity of it all and to demand the organization of a club "where they don't put a feller out fer shootin' craps—wot's craps!"

But I was telling of the roof garden and what happened there. It was in the long vacation when it is open from early morning until all the little ones in the neighborhood are asleep and the house closes its doors. All through the day

the children own the garden and carry on their play there. One evening each week our girls' club have an "at home" on the roof, and on three nights the boys bring their friends and smoke and talk. Wednesday and Friday are mothers' and children's nights. That was when they began it. The little ones had been telling stories of Cinderella and Red Riding Hood and Beauty and the Beast and Rebecca of Sunnybrook Farm, and before they themselves realized that they were doing it, they were acting them. The dramatic instinct is strong in these children. The "princess" of the fairy tales appeals irresistibly, Cinderella even more. The triumph of good over evil is rapturously applauded; the villain has to look out for himself—and indeed, he had better! Don't I know? Have I forgotten the time they put me out of the theater in Copenhagen for shrieking "Murder! Police!" when the rascal lover—nice lover, he!—was on the very point of plunging a gleaming knife into the heart of the beautiful maiden who slept in an armchair, unconscious of her peril. And I was sixteen; these are eight, or nine.

So the prince rode off with Cinderella in front of him on a fiery kindergarten chair, and the wicked sisters were left to turn green with envy; and another prince with black cotton mustache, on an even more impetuous charger, a tuft of tissue paper in his cap for a feather, galloped up to release Beauty with a kiss from her century of sleep; and Beauty awoke as naturally as if she had but just closed her eyes, amid volleys of applause from the roof and from the tenements, every window in which was a reserved seat.

Next the Bad Wolf strode into the ring, with honeyed speech to beguile little Red Riding Hood. The plays had rapidly become so popular that a regular ring had to be made on the roof for a stage. When the seats gave out, chalk lines took their place and the children and their mothers sat on them with all the gravity befitting the dress-circle. Red Riding Hood having happily escaped being eaten alive, Rebecca rode by with cheery smile and pink parasol, as full of sunshine as the brook on her home farm. The children shouted their delight.

"Where do you get it all?" asked one who did not know of our dog-eared library they grew up with before the Carnegie branch came and we put ours in the attic.

"We know the story—all we have to do is to act it," was the children's reply. And act it they did, until the report went abroad that at the Riis House there was a prime show every Wednesday and Friday night. That was when the schools reopened and the recreation center at No. in the next block was

closed. Then its crowds came and besieged our house until the street was jammed and traffic impossible. For the first and only time in its history a policeman had to be placed on the stoop, or we should have been swamped past hope. But he is gone long ago. Don't let him deter you from calling.

The nights are cold now, and Cinderella rides no more on the prancing steed of her fairy prince. The children's songs have ceased. Beauty and the Beast are tucked away with the ivy and the bulbs and the green shrubs against the bright sunny days that are coming. The wolf is a bad memory, and the tenement windows that were filled with laughing faces are vacant and shut. But many a child smiles in its sleep, dreaming of the happy hours in our roof garden, and many a mother's heavy burden was lightened because of it and because of the children's joy. The garden was an afterthought—we had taken their playground in the yard, and there was the wide roof. It seemed as though it ought to be put to use. They said flowers wouldn't grow down in that hole, and that the neighbors would throw things, and anyway the children would despoil them. Well, they did grow, never better, and the whole block grew up to them. Their message went into every tenement house home. Not the crabbedest old bachelor ever threw anything on our roof to disgrace it; and as for the children, they loved the flowers. That tells it all. The stone we made light of proved the cornerstone of the building. There is nothing in our house, full as it is of a hundred activities to bring sweetening touch to weary lives, that has half the cheer in it which our roof garden holds in summer, nothing that has tenderer memories for us all the year round.

That is the story of the flowers in one garden as big as the average back yard, and of the girls who took them to their hearts. For, of course, it was the girls who did it. The boys—well! boys are boys in Henry Street as on Madison Avenue. Perhaps on ours there is a trifle less veneering. They had a party to end up with, and ice-cream, lots of it. But as the mothers couldn't come, it being washday or something, and they didn't want their sisters—they were hardly old enough to see the advantage of swapping them over—they had to eat it themselves, all of it. I am not even sure they didn't plan it so. The one redeeming feature was that they treated the workers liberally first. Else they might have died of indigestion. Whether they planned that, too, I wonder.

THE SNOW BABIES' CHRISTMAS

"All aboard for Coney Island!" The gates of the bridge train slammed, the whistle shrieked, and the cars rolled out past rows of houses that grew smaller and lower to Jim's wondering eyes, until they quite disappeared beneath the track. He felt himself launching forth above the world of men, and presently he saw, deep down below, the broad stream with ships and ferry-boats and craft going different ways, just like the tracks and traffic in a big, wide street; only so far away was it all that the pennant on the topmast of a vessel passing directly under the train seemed as if it did not belong to his world at all. Jim followed the white foam in the wake of the sloop with fascinated stare, until a puffing tug bustled across its track and wiped it out. Then he settled back in his seat with a sigh that had been pent up within him twenty long, wondering minutes since he limped down the Subway at Twenty-third Street. It was his first journey abroad.

Jim had never been to the Brooklyn Bridge before. It is doubtful if he had ever heard of it. If he had, it was as of something so distant, so unreal, as to have been quite within the realm of fairyland, had his life experience included fairies. It had not. Jim's frail craft had been launched in Little Italy, half a dozen miles or more up-town, and there it had been moored, its rovings being limited at the outset by babyhood and the tenement, and later on by the wreck that had made of him a castaway for life. A mysterious something had attacked one of Jim's ankles, and, despite ointments and lotions prescribed by the wise women of the tenement, had eaten into the bone and stayed there. At nine the lad was a cripple with one leg shorter than the other by two or three inches, with a stepmother, a squalling baby to mind for his daily task, hard words and kicks for his wage; for Jim was an unprofitable investment, promising no returns, but, rather, constant worry and outlay. The outlook was not the most cheering in the world.

But, happily, Jim was little concerned about things to come. He lived in the day that is, fighting his way as he could with a leg and a half and a nickname,—"Gimpy" they called him for his limp,—and getting out of it what a fellow so handicapped could. After all, there were compensations. When the gang scattered before the cop, it did not occur to him to lay any of the blame to Gimpy, though the little lad with the pinched face and sharp eyes had, in fact, done scouting duty most craftily. It was partly in acknowledgment of such services, partly as a concession to his sharper wits, that Gimpy was tacitly

allowed a seat in the councils of the Cave Gang, though in the far "kid" corner. He limped through their campaigns with them, learned to swim by "dropping off the dock" at the end of the street into the swirling tide, and once nearly lost his life when one of the bigger boys dared him to run through an election bonfire like his able-bodied comrades. Gimpy started to do it at once, but stumbled and fell, and was all but burned to death before the other boys could pull him out. This act of bravado earned him full membership in the gang, despite his tender years; and, indeed, it is doubtful if in all that region there was a lad of his age as tough and loveless as Gimpy. The one affection of his barren life was the baby that made it slavery by day. But, somehow, there was that in its chubby foot groping for him in its baby sleep, or in the little round head pillowed on his shoulder, that more than made up for it all.

Ill luck was surely Gimpy's portion. It was not a month after he had returned to the haunts of the gang, a battle-scarred veteran now since his encounter with the bonfire, when "the Society's" officers held up the huckster's wagon from which he was crying potatoes with his thin, shrill voice, which somehow seemed to convey the note of pain that was the prevailing strain of his life. They made Gimpy a prisoner, limp, stick, and all. The inquiry that ensued as to his years and home setting, the while Gimpy was undergoing the incredible experience of being washed and fed regularly three times a day, set in motion the train of events that was at present hurrying him toward Coney Island in midwinter, with a snow-storm draping the land in white far and near, as the train sped seaward. He gasped as he reviewed the hurrying events of the week: the visit of the doctor from Sea Breeze, who had scrutinized his ankle as if he expected to find some of the swag of the last raid hidden somewhere about it. Gimpy never took his eyes off him during the examination. No word or cry escaped him when it hurt most, but his bright, furtive eyes never left the doctor or lost one of his movements. "Just like a weasel caught in a trap," said the doctor, speaking of his charge afterward.

But when it was over, he clapped Gimpy on the shoulder and said it was all right. He was sure he could help.

"Have him at the Subway to-morrow at twelve," was his parting direction; and Gimpy had gone to bed to dream that he was being dragged down the stone stairs by three helmeted men, to be fed to a monster breathing fire and smoke at the foot of the stairs.

Now his wondering journey was disturbed by a cheery voice beside him. “Well, bub, ever see that before?” and the doctor pointed to the gray ocean line dead ahead. Gimpy had not seen it, but he knew well enough what it was.

“It’s the river,” he said, “that I cross when I go to Italy.”

“Right!” and his companion held out a helping hand as the train pulled up at the end of the journey. “Now let’s see how we can navigate.”

And, indeed, there was need of seeing about it. Right from the step of the train the snow lay deep, a pathless waste burying street and sidewalk out of sight, blocking the closed and barred gate of Dreamland, of radiant summer memory, and stalling the myriad hobby-horses of shows that slept their long winter sleep. Not a whinny came on the sharp salt breeze. The strident voice of the carpenter’s saw and the rat-tat-tat of his hammer alone bore witness that there was life somewhere in the white desert. The doctor looked in dismay at Gimpy’s brace and high shoe, and shook his head.

“He never can do it. Hello, there!” An express wagon had come into view around the corner of the shed. “Here’s a job for you.” And before he could have said Jack Robinson, Gimpy felt himself hoisted bodily into the wagon and deposited there like any express package. From somewhere a longish something that proved to be a Christmas-tree, very much wrapped and swathed about, came to keep him company. The doctor climbed up by the driver, and they were off. Gimpy recalled with a dull sense of impending events in which for once he had no shaping hand, as he rubbed his ears where the bitter blast pinched, that to-morrow was Christmas.

A strange group was that which gathered about the supper-table at Sea Breeze that night. It would have been sufficiently odd to any one anywhere; but to Gimpy, washed, in clean, comfortable raiment, with his bad foot set in a firm bandage, and for once no longer sore with the pain that had racked his frame from babyhood, it seemed so unreal that once or twice he pinched himself covertly to see if he were really awake. They came weakly stumping with sticks and crutches and on club feet, the lame and the halt, the children of sorrow and suffering from the city slums, and stood leaning on crutch or chair for support while they sang their simple grace; but neither in their clear childish voices nor yet in the faces that were turned toward Gimpy in friendly scrutiny as the last comer, was there trace of pain. Their cheeks were ruddy and their eyes bright with the health of outdoors, and when they sang about the “Frog in

the Pond," in response to a spontaneous demand, laughter bubbled over around the table. Gimpy, sizing his fellow-boarders up according to the standards of the gang, with the mental conclusion that he "could lick the bunch," felt a warm little hand worming its way into his, and, looking into a pair of trustful baby eyes, choked with a sudden reminiscent pang, but smiled back at his friend and felt suddenly at home. Little Ellen, with the pervading affections, had added him to her family of brothers. What honors were in store for him in that relation Gimpy never guessed. Ellen left no one out. When summer came again she enlarged the family further by adopting the President of the United States as her papa, when he came visiting to Sea Breeze; and by rights Gimpy should have achieved a pull such as would have turned the boss of his ward green with envy.

It appeared speedily that something unusual was on foot. There was a subdued excitement among the children which his experience diagnosed at first flush as the symptoms of a raid. But the fact that in all the waste of snow on the way over he had seen nothing rising to the apparent dignity of candy-shop or grocery-store made him dismiss the notion as untenable. Presently unfamiliar doings developed. The children who could write scribbled notes on odd sheets of paper, which the nurses burned in the fireplace with solemn incantations. Something in the locked dining-room was an object of pointed interest. Things were going on there, and expeditions to penetrate the mystery were organized at brief intervals, and as often headed off by watchful nurses.

When, finally, the children were gotten upstairs and undressed, from the headpost of each of thirty-six beds there swung a little stocking, limp and yawning with mute appeal. Gimpy had "caught on" by this time: it was a wishing-bee, and old Santa Claus was supposed to fill the stockings with what each had most desired. The consultation over, baby George had let him into the game. Baby George did not know enough to do his own wishing, and the thirty-five took it in hand while he was being put to bed.

"Let's wish for some little dresses for him," said big Mariano, who was the baby's champion and court of last resort; "that's what he needs." And it was done. Gimpy smiled a little disdainfully at the credulity of the "kids." The Santa Claus fake was out of date a long while in his tenement. But he voted for baby George's dresses, all the same, and even went to the length of recording his own wish for a good baseball bat. Gimpy was coming on.

Going to bed in that queer place fairly “stumped” Gimpy. “Peelin’” had been the simplest of processes in Little Italy. Here they pulled a fellow’s clothes off only to put on another lot, heavier every way, with sweater and hood and flannel socks and mittens to boot, as if the boy were bound for a tussle with the storm outside rather than for his own warm bed. And so, in fact, he was. For no sooner had he been tucked under the blankets, warm and snug, than the nurses threw open all the windows, every one, and let the gale from without surge in and through as it listed; and so they left them. Gimpy shivered as he felt the frosty breath of the ocean nipping his nose, and crept under the blanket for shelter. But presently he looked up and saw the other boys snoozing happily like so many little Eskimos equipped for the North Pole, and decided to keep them company. For a while he lay thinking of the strange things that had happened that day, since his descent into the Subway. If the gang could see him now. But it seemed far away, with all his past life—farther than the river with the ships deep down below. Out there upon the dark waters, in the storm, were they sailing now, and all the lights of the city swallowed up in gloom? Presently he heard through it all the train roaring far off in the Subway and many hurrying feet on the stairs. The iron gates clanked—and he fell asleep with the song of the sea for his lullaby. Mother Nature had gathered her child to her bosom, and the slum had lost in the battle for a life.

The clock had not struck two when from the biggest boy’s bed in the corner there came in a clear, strong alto the strains of “Ring, ring, happy bells!” and from every room childish voices chimed in. The nurses hurried to stop the chorus with the message that it was yet five hours to daylight. They were up, trimming the tree in the dining-room; at the last moment the crushing announcement had been made that the candy had been forgotten, and a midnight expedition had set out for the city through the storm to procure it. A semblance of order was restored, but cat naps ruled after that, till, at daybreak, a gleeful shout from Ellen’s bed proclaimed that Santa Claus had been there, in very truth, and had left a dolly in her stocking. It was the signal for such an uproar as had not been heard on that beach since Port Arthur fell for the last time upon its defenders three months before. From thirty-six stockings came forth a veritable army of tops, balls, wooden animals of unknown pedigree, oranges, music-boxes, and cunning little pocket-books, each with a shining silver quarter in, love-tokens of one in the great city whose heart must have been light with happy dreams in that hour. Gimpy drew forth from his stocking a very able-bodied baseball bat and considered it with a

stunned look. Santa Claus was a fake, but the bat—there was no denying that, and he had wished for one the very last thing before he fell asleep!

Daylight struggled still with a heavy snow-squall when the signal was given for the carol "Christmas time has come again," and the march down to breakfast. That march! On the third step the carol was forgotten and the band broke into one long cheer that was kept up till the door of the dining-room was reached. At the first glimpse within, baby George's wail rose loud and grievous: "My chair! my chair!" But it died in a shriek of joy as he saw what it was that had taken its place. There stood the Christmas-tree, one mass of shining candles, and silver and gold, and angels with wings, and wondrous things of colored paper all over it from top to bottom. Gimpy's eyes sparkled at the sight, skeptic though he was at nine; and in the depths of his soul he came over, then and there, to Santa Claus, to abide forever—only he did not know it yet.

To make the children eat any breakfast, with three gay sleds waiting to take the girls out in the snow, was no easy matter; but it was done at last, and they swarmed forth for a holiday in the open. All days are spent in the open at Sea Breeze,—even the school is a tent,—and very cold weather only shortens the brief school hour; but this day was to be given over to play altogether. Winter it was "for fair," but never was coasting enjoyed on New England hills as these sledding journeys on the sands where the surf beat in with crash of thunder. The sea itself had joined in making Christmas for its little friends. The day before, a regiment of crabs had come ashore and surrendered to the cook at Sea Breeze. Christmas morn found the children's "floor"—they called the stretch of clean, hard sand between high-water mark and the surf-line by that name—filled with gorgeous shells and pebbles, and strange fishes left there by the tide overnight. The fair-weather friends who turn their backs upon old ocean with the first rude blasts of autumn little know what wonderful surprises it keeps for those who stand by it in good and in evil report.

When the very biggest turkey that ever strutted in barnyard was discovered steaming in the middle of the dinner-table and the report went round in whispers that ice-cream had been seen carried in in pails, and when, in response to a pull at the bell, Matron Thomsen ushered in a squad of smiling mamas and papas to help eat the dinner, even Gimpy gave in to the general joy, and avowed that Christmas was "bully." Perhaps his acceptance of the fact was made easier by a hasty survey of the group of papas and mamas, which assured him that his own were not among them. A fleeting glimpse of the baby, deserted and disconsolate, brought the old pucker to his brow for a passing

moment; but just then big Fred set off a snapper at his very ear, and thrusting a pea-green fool's-cap upon his head, pushed him into the roistering procession that hobbled round and round the table, cheering fit to burst. And the babies that had been brought down from their cribs, strapped, because their backs were crooked, in the frames that look so cruel and are so kind, lifted up their feeble voices as they watched the show with shining eyes. Little baby Helen, who could only smile and wave "by-by" with one fat hand, piped in with her tiny voice, "Here I is!" It was all she knew, and she gave that with a right good will, which is as much as one can ask of anybody, even of a snow baby.

If there were still lacking a last link to rivet Gimpy's loyalty to his new home for good and all, he himself supplied it when the band gathered under the leafless trees—for Sea Breeze has a grove in summer, the only one on the island—and whiled away the afternoon making a "park" in the snow, with sea-shells for curbing and boundary stones. When it was all but completed, Gimpy, with an inspiration that then and there installed him leader, gave it the finishing touch by drawing a policeman on the corner with a club, and a sign, "Keep off the grass." Together they gave it the air of reality and the true local color that made them feel, one and all, that now indeed they were at home.

Toward evening a snow-storm blew in from the sea, but instead of scurrying for shelter, the little Eskimos joined the doctor in hauling wood for a big bonfire on the beach. There, while the surf beat upon the shore hardly a dozen steps away, and the storm whirled the snow-clouds in weird drifts over sea and land, they drew near the fire, and heard the doctor tell stories that seemed to come right out of the darkness and grow real while they listened. Dr. Wallace is a Southerner and lived his childhood with Br'er Rabbit and Mr. Fox, and they saw them plainly gamboling in the firelight as the story went on. For the doctor knows boys and loves them, that is how.

No one would have guessed that they were cripples, every one of that rugged band that sat down around the Christmas supper-table, rosy-cheeked and jolly—cripples condemned, but for Sea Breeze, to lives of misery and pain, most of them to an early death and suffering to others. For their enemy was that foe of mankind, the White Plague, that for thousands of years has taken tithe and toll of the ignorance and greed and selfishness of man, which sometimes we call with one name— the slum. Gimpy never would have dreamed that the tenement held no worse threat for the baby he yearned for than himself, with his crippled foot, when he was there. These things you could not have told even

the fathers and mothers; or if you had, no one there but the doctor and the nurses would have believed you. They knew only too well. But two things you could make out, with no trouble at all, by the lamplight: one, that they were one and all on the homeward stretch to health and vigor—Gimpy himself was a different lad from the one who had crept shivering to bed the night before; and this other, that they were the sleepiest crew of youngsters ever got together. Before they had finished the first verse of "America" as their good night, standing up like little men, half of them were down and asleep with their heads pillowed upon their arms. And so Miss Brass, the head nurse, gathered them in and off to bed.

"And now, boys," she said as they were being tucked in, "your prayers." And of those who were awake each said his own: Willie his "Now I lay me," Mariano his "Ave," but little Bent from the Eastside tenement wailed that he didn't have any. Bent was a newcomer like Gimpy.

"Then," said six-year-old Morris, resolutely,—he also was a Jew,—"I learn him mine vat my fader tol' me." And getting into Bent's crib, he crept under the blanket with his little comrade. Gimpy saw them reverently pull their worsted caps down over their heads, and presently their tiny voices whispered together, in the jargon of the East Side, their petition to the Father of all, who looked lovingly down through the storm upon his children of many folds.

The last prayer was said, and all was still. Through the peaceful breathing of the boys all about him, Gimpy, alone wakeful, heard the deep bass of the troubled sea. The storm had blown over. Through the open windows shone the eternal stars, as on that night in the Judean hills when shepherds herded their flocks and

"The angels of the Lord came down."

He did not know. He was not thinking of angels; none had ever come to his slum. But a great peace came over him and filled his child-soul. It may be that the nurse saw it shining in his eyes and thought it fever. It may be that she, too, was thinking in that holy hour. She bent over him and laid a soothing hand upon his brow.

"You must sleep now," she said.

Something that was not of the tenement, something vital, with which his old life had no concern, welled up in Gimpy at the touch. He caught her hand and held it.

“I will if you will sit here,” he said. He could not help it.

“Why, Jimmy?” She stroked back his shock of stubborn hair. Something glistened on her eyelashes as she looked at the forlorn little face on the pillow. How should Gimpy know that he was at that moment leading another struggling soul by the hand toward the light that never dies?

“’Cause,” he gulped hard, but finished manfully—“’cause I love you.”

Gimpy had learned the lesson of Christmas,

“And glory shone around.”

AS TOLD BY THE RABBI

Three stories have come to me out of the past for which I would make friends in the present. The first I have from a rabbi of our own day whom I met last winter in the far Southwest. The other two were drawn from the wisdom of the old rabbis that is as replete with human contradiction as the strange people of whose life it was, and is, a part. If they help us to understand how near we live to one another, after all, it is well. Without other comment, I shall leave each reader to make his own application of them.

This was the story my friend the Arkansas rabbi told. It is from the folk-lore of Russia:

A woman who had lain in torment a thousand years lifted her face toward heaven and cried to the Lord to set her free, for she could endure it no longer. And he looked down and said: "Can you remember one thing you did for a human being without reward in your earth life?"

The woman groaned in bitter anguish, for she had lived in selfish ease; the neighbor had been nothing to her.

"Was there not one? Think well!"

"Once—it was nothing—I gave to a starving man a carrot, and he thanked me."

"Bring, then, the carrot. Where is it?"

"It is long since, Lord," she sobbed, "and it is lost."

"Not so; witness of the one unselfish deed of your life, it could not perish. Go," said the Lord to an angel, "find the carrot and bring it here."

The angel brought the carrot and held it over the bottomless pit, letting it down till it was within reach of the woman. "Cling to it," he said. She did as she was bidden, and found herself rising out of her misery.

Now, when the other souls in torment saw her drawn upward, they seized her hands, her waist, her feet, her garments, and clung to them with despairing cries, so that there rose out of the pit an ever-lengthening chain of writhing, wailing humanity clinging to the frail root. Higher and higher it rose till it was

half-way to heaven, and still its burden grew. The woman looked down, and fear and anger seized her—fear that the carrot would break, and anger at the meddling of those strangers who put her in peril. She struggled, and beat with hands and feet upon those below her.

“Let go,” she cried; “it is my carrot.”

The words were hardly out of her mouth before the carrot broke, and she fell, with them all, back into torment, and the pit swallowed them up.

In a little German town the pious Rabbi Jisroel Isserlheim is deep in the study of the sacred writings, when of a sudden the Messiah stands before him. The time of trial of his people is past, so runs his message; that very evening he will come, and their sufferings will be over. He prays that his host will summon a carriage in which he may make his entry into town. Trembling with pride and joy, the rabbi falls at his feet and worships. But in the very act of rising doubts assail him.

“Thou temptest me, Master!” he exclaims; “it is written that the Messiah shall come riding upon an ass.”

“Be it so. Send thou for the ass.” But in all the countryside far and near no ass is to be found; the rabbi knows it. The Messiah waits.

“Do you not see that you are barring the way with your scruples to the salvation you long for? The sun is far in the west; do not let it set, for if this day pass, the Jews must suffer for untold ages to come. Would you set an ass between me and the salvation of my people?”

The man stands irresolute. “Ten minutes, and I must go,” urges his visitor. But at last the rabbi has seen his duty clear.

“No Messiah without the ass,” he cries; and the Messiah goes on his way.

Once, so runs the legend, there lived in far Judean hills two affectionate brothers, tilling a common field together. One had a wife and a houseful of children; the other was a lonely man. One night in the harvest time the older brother said to his wife: “My brother is a lonely man. I will go out and move some of the sheaves from my side of the field over on his, so that when he sees them in the morning his heart will be cheered by the abundance.” And he did.

That same night the other brother said to his workmen: “My brother has a house ful and many mouths to fill. I am alone, and do not need all this wealth. I will go and move some of my sheaves over on his field, so that he shall rejoice in the morning when he sees how great is his store.” And he did. They did it that night and the next, in the sheltering dark. But on the third night the moon came out as they met face to face, each with his arms filled with sheaves. On that spot, says the legend, was built the Temple of Jerusalem, for it was esteemed that there earth came nearest heaven.

THE STRAND FROM ABOVE

From the Danish of Johannes Jörgensen

The sun rose on a bright September morning. A thousand gems of dew sparkled in the meadows, and upon the breeze floated, in the wake of summer, the shining silken strands of which no man knoweth the whence or the whither.

One of them caught in the top of a tree, and the skipper, a little speckled yellow spider, quit his airship to survey the leafy demesne there. It was not to his liking, and, with prompt decision, he spun a new strand and let himself down straight into the hedge below.

There were twigs and shoots in plenty there to spin a web in, and he went to work at once, letting the strand from above, by which he had come, bear the upper corner of it.

A fine large web it was when finished, and with this about it that set it off from all the other webs thereabouts, that it seemed to stand straight up in the air, without anything to show what held it. It takes pretty sharp eyes to make out a single strand of a spider-web, even a very little way off.

The days went by. Flies grew scarcer, as the sun rose later, and the spider had to make his net larger that it might reach farther and catch more. And here the strand from above turned out a great help. With it to brace the structure, the web was spun higher and wider, until it covered the hedge all the way across. In the wet October mornings, when it hung full of shimmering raindrops, it was like a veil stitched with precious pearls.

The spider was proud of his work. No longer the little thing that had come drifting out of the vast with nothing but its unspun web in its pocket, so to speak, he was now a big, portly, opulent spider, with the largest web in the hedge.

One morning he awoke very much out of sorts. There had been a frost in the night, and daylight brought no sun. The sky was overcast; not a fly was out. All the long gray autumn day the spider sat hungry and cross in his corner. Toward evening, to kill time, he started on a tour of inspection, to see if anything needed bracing or mending. He pulled at all the strands; they were

firm enough. But though he found nothing wrong, his temper did not improve; he waxed crosser than ever.

At the farthest end of the web he came at last to a strand that all at once seemed strange to him. All the rest went this way or that—the spider knew every stick and knob they were made fast to, every one. But this preposterous strand went nowhere—that is to say, went straight up in the air and was lost. He stood up on his hind legs and stared with all his eyes, but he could not make it out. To look at, the strand went right up into the clouds, which was nonsense.

The longer he sat and glared to no purpose, the angrier the spider grew. He had quite forgotten how on a bright September morning he himself had come down this same strand. And he had forgotten how, in the building of the web and afterward when it had to be enlarged, it was just this strand he had depended upon. He saw only that here was a useless strand, a fool strand, that went nowhere in sense or reason, only up in the air where solid spiders had no concern....

"Away with it!" and with one vicious snap of his angry jaws he bit the strand in two.

That instant the web collapsed, the whole proud and prosperous structure fell in a heap, and when the spider came to he lay sprawling in the hedge with the web all about his head like a wet rag. In one brief moment he had wrecked it all—because he did not understand the use of the strand from above.