SEVEN MOUTHS AND ONE LOAF.

Discouraged by Strikers, Samuel Seigel, a Cap-Maker, Deserts His Wife and Six Children.

He Leaves a Letter Full of Advice as to How the Children Shall Be Brought Up Righteously, but Takes All the Money Save Five Cents, Enough for One Loaf of Bread--A "Benefit" at the Roumania Opera-House.

A week from next Saturday, April 18, there will be given at the Roumania Opera-House in the Bowery a performance of "Judith and Holofernes." Any good German denizen of the east side who buys a ticket for the play will have the double pleasure of seeing a good act and of doing a kind action at the same time. All the proceeds over and above the expenses will be given to Esther Seigel, the poor, unhappy wife of Samuel Seigel, the cap finisher, who deserted her and six helpless children two weeks ago.

THE WORLD of yesterday printed a brief paragraph about the projected benefit and the destitution of the Seigel family. But THE WORLD had not then in its possession the sad history of the household at No. 189 Division street. A WORLD reporter spent an hour yesterday afternoon with the deserted woman and learned from her own lips the story of her misery. Another hour was exhausted among the neighbors of the Seigel family, who one and all testified to the mother's good character and worthiness. In a word, when Samuel Seigel, disheartened and discouraged with his fight against poverty and misfortune, turned his back on the woman who had been his faithful wife for fifteen years, he left her with just five cents.

THE WORLD reporter who called on Mrs. Seigel, found her sitting in a dingy room, which served at the same time for a bedroom and a parlor. She was weeping quietly over a worn, crumpled letter that she had taken from her pocket. It was the hasty note which her husband had sent to her the day that he fled. It was written in German and being interpreted ran as follows:

My Beloved Wife:

You know how I brought you and the children to New York from New Jersey, with the intention of bettering here our unfortunate condition. You know how hard I have tried to find steady employment for you and them in this big city. You know, too, how unsuccessful I have been, and I have told how, because I was a non-union man, I was locked out from securing the kind of employment that I had hoped to obtain. You also know how I was attacked by three men because I was what they call a "scab" workman and how ill-used I have been by the strikers.

I am very sorry to have to write you this letter, but I am discouraged. I am going to Texas. Perhaps it won't be long before I shall send for you and the children. I know that you have no money and the few dollars that I have I need at present. But you can sell the furniture and that will help you along for some time.

Be careful of the children and keep them at school as long as you can. Teach them to be good and honest. Be a good mother to them and then they will love you, and when they are in positions to help you they will never see you starve. It grieves me to write this. But perhaps it won't be long before we are all together again. I love my children and have tried hard to earn an honest living for them. Good bye to you, my beloved wife and to them, for now."

Seigel had penned this hasty note in a very firm and handsome handwriting. It tells its own story. Seigel was a fond father and husband, but he was weak, volatile and easily discouraged. The little business by which he had subsisted for ten years in New Jersey had in an evil day gone to pieces. That evil day fell very near last New Year's. In his extremity Seigel looked to New York as the place where he could easily find plenty of work to do, and in a year or so he would be on his feet, in a little business of his own once more. According to his wife's characterization of him, Seigel was something of a dreamer.

"He was always hankering for a change," she said yesterday in her broken English. "When things went wrong in one place he would never stop to think, but would say: 'Let us go to New York or Chicago or Texas.' I used to try to reason with him," Mrs. Seigel went on between her tears, "and told him again that if it was not possible to earn a living in one place it was foolish to think of another away off somewhere. For a long time he had that idea of Texas in his mind, and I did all that I could to get it out of his head. I always thought that no good would come out of all his dreaming."

For ten years before he came to New York, two and a half months ago, Seigel had been a peddler in and about Newark. Newark is not by any means a village, yet Mrs. Seigel, in alluding to the place of her old home, always spoke of it as "the country." New York looked to her a great and terrible spot. That dream of her husband's—to go to the city where he could get "good wages"—had been the ruination of her children and herself. She had been very happy and contented in "the country," and the "rent was so much cheaper there."

In his humble way in those ten years Seigel, the peddler of dry-goods notions, had been very prosperous. The children had been able to attend school always, and the rent was invariably met when due. There was no lack of meat and beer on Sundays. There were always shoes for the twelve little feet of the children, and plenty of coal in the bin. But trouble came thick and fast, and in one day—just as if he were a big manipulator in the street—poor Seigel found himself not only penniless but with a list of creditors whose claims, paltry as they might seem to any well-to-do mechanic, it would take months for the man to meet.

When a young man Seigel was apprenticed to a hat finisher. He thought of his old work when he turned his attention to New York and began to cast about for a place where he could sit as formerly "before the machine." After a short quest he went back to his wife in Newark and told her that he had found a good position in the city. Mrs. Seigel questioned her husband closely, but he assured her that she need have no fears. All that he had to do was to sign a paper and for a year he would be in receipt of at least $12 a week in a prosperous hat manufactory in South Fifth avenue.

The dreaming peddler didn't have a very clear idea as to the character of the paper except that it would guarantee him $12 a week. Esther Seigel, who hardly spoke the English language, reluctantly believed "her man" when he told her such a glowing story of the good luck he had stumbled upon.

Esther tore up the roots of her old home in "the country" with tears in her eyes. She has had tears in her eyes ever since, poor woman. She didn't know what a "scab" was, when she first learned, after taking the rooms at No. 189 Division street, that her husband was characterized by that term. After a few days in the manufactory he began telling her that his life was threatened every morning and evening. By whom? By the union men, the strikers. Finally Esther Seigel learned too well all the significant terms in the workingman's dictionary. And she soon begun to have her fears of the big city realized when she saw her husband bring home his great sharp scissors every night, to protect himself against the strikers, as he said, and when the outslaught upon himself, mentioned in the note of farewell, took place one night a short time ago in Essex street.

Saturday night two weeks ago Esther Seigel received that note. Then the half-defined horror of her husband's love of change and dissatisfaction with whatever he was doing took a positive form. He was gone at last, after fifteen years, and she was alone with her six children. The great city, with the many chances for earning big wages, had not been what Seigel, the peddler, dreamed it to be.

That dream was shattered forever. The striking workmen and disappointment coming after disappointment were too much for Sam Seigel, who meant well but had something of the coward in his nature, which spoiled his good intentions. New York was a failure. But Texas remained. He would go there as at a last chance.

What has not been told in this story of the misery of the woman whom he left behind—left behind with six children, all under fifteen years of age—and his comforting letter of impossible instructions is easily told. To pay her necessary expenses for bread and fuel Mrs. Seigel has already followed her husband's advice, and her parlor furniture is gone. The boy, Harry, thirteen years of age, is now out with a relative in Newark working in a shop for $2 a week. Harry, aged twelve, goes to a public school in the morning, and yesterday his mother got him admission in the institution in Division street, which he will attend afternoons. Gussie, the eldest girl, barely fifteen years of age, has tried to find work, but she is very delicate and as yet has met with no success. Rosie and Nettie, nine and seven respectively, of course can do nothing for themselves. Max, the baby, ten months old, is ill with teething and fever. Mrs. Seigel cannot leave him to go out to scrub.

But in her troubles she has found some kind strangers among her neighbors, who have interested themselves in her sorrow. Among them are Leopold Peck, of No. 151 Clinton street, and Lawyer Maurice Blumenthal, while Coroner Levy, Judge Goldfogle, Judge Steckler, Inspector Ben Blumenthal, Judge McCarthy and Judge Harberger will lend their influence towards filling as full as possible the unfortunate woman's purse by the coming benefit. When Mrs. Seigel was told about the helping hand that had been stretched out to her in her distress she could not speak to thank her benefactors. She could only weep.