TRUE STORIES OF THE NEWS.

"PUT YOURSELF IN HIS PLACE."

What Would You Do If, Like Poor Joe Clark, You Could Get No Work and Found Your Helpless Family Put Out Upon the Street on a Winter Morning?

One of the Many Chapters from Poverty's Big Book—The Misfortunes that Pursued a Family Despite All Efforts to Overcome Them—And All Joe Clark Asks Is Work.

No. 506 East Seventeenth street is a great tenement-house that towers grimly above its neighbors. You step from the sidewalk into the narrow, dark hall, in which the sun never seems to shine, and from which flights of equally dark, narrow steps lead to the many floors above. There is hardly a glimpse of the sky obtainable from any of the windows, and such a thing as a blade of green grass is never seen. Poverty is everywhere. Hunger often raps at the doors and sometimes stalks boldly in and takes its place at the bare tables.

Glimpses into the different rooms show heavy-eyed women bending over washtubs or ironing-boards, nursing sick children or dividing a small loaf of bread among the little ones and waiting for the miracle to work.

In the two-room "suites" large families huddle together. To pay the rent is their highest ambition. Food, clothing, everything is sacrificed to that, and usually they manage to get together each month the few dollars that keep them from the streets.

But occasionally there is a "dispossession." Marshal and men invade the place and down the rickety steps bumps a trunk, a stove, an old sofa—the earthly effects of some family which is "behind the date."

The lares and penates are followed by a crying woman and some frightened children, who sit about on the sidewalk for a few hours and then disappear. Where they go nobody knows, and apparently nobody cares.

A LONG STRUGGLE WITH POVERTY.

But there was an eviction in this house yesterday which interested and affected even the inmates who are so used to scenes of misery. Mr. and Mrs. Joseph Clark and their four little children were turned into the streets, penniless and hopeless. The story of their long struggle and final defeat was familiar to most of their neighbors, and their children had made themselves loved in families where children are usually at a discount; so many sympathetic eyes watched them as they followed their few pieces of furniture into the world.

The Clarks are not the sort of people usually found in this class of tenement-houses. When they married, seven years ago, it is very unlikely that they expected to drift into one. Joe was a hard-working, steady young fellow, with a conviction that Lizzie was the best woman on earth and that he wasn't half good enough for her.

Lizzie felt very much the same way as to Joe's virtues and her own unworthiness. So they started in with a capital of youth, love, health and industry, and for a year everything went merrily. Joe worked twelve hours out of the twenty-four and thought himself an object for public envy. They had a few cosy rooms, which they furnished as well as they could, buying a chair one week, a few shelves the next, pictures the next, and making themselves a home.

When the baby came Joe was offered work in the Hoffman House and labored there for thirteen months. Every week he brought home twelve silver dollars and handed them to Lizzie. They didn't represent much capital, but they looked as large as cart-wheels to the little woman, and she invested them with a wisdom and economy which astonished her husband. They couldn't possibly have been happy under these circumstances, some cynics may think, but they thought they were, and Joe is wont to refer to those days with a suspicious quiver in his boyish voice.

A CHAPTER OF MISFORTUNES.

By and bye the baby got sick, and there were days and nights of watching, hoping and dreading. There was a doctor's bill and a little coffin and a funeral. With the

THE EVICTION OF THE CLARKS AT 506 EAST SEVENTEENTH STREET.

dead child, which was carried out to Calvary, there went much of the light and hope of the home. Joe lost his position, and things began to look darker.

They had to sell some of the furniture before he found work, but when he did he went into it with heart and soul to make up for lost time and to pay his debts. He worked steadily until last September. When the gas-fitting in the pencil factory on Fourteenth street was finished, Joe found himself again out of employment.

The little money saved was soon exhausted. They moved into the tenement house at 506 East Seventeenth street and took up their abode in two back rooms on the fifth floor. There were three children by this time—Archie, a handsome, sturdy little chap of five, Fannie, three, and John, a precocious youngster of two.

There was rent to be paid, fuel to be bought, five mouths to be fed and no money to do it with. Joe walked the streets desperately from morning until night. Occasionally he got an "odd job," as he called it—four or five days' work in place of some sick man, or even a week or two. Then, just before Christmas, the baby came. He had found some odd plumbing and roofing to do at that season; so they pulled along. Lizzie had come down to washing but the baby's birth stopped that. Afterwards Joe sawed wood, ran errands, shovelled snow, did everything his hand found to do, and kept his family warm and housed.

In February, however, they fell behind in their account with the landlords, but Joe did some roofing on the house and that was accepted in lieu of rent. Then there came days when walking the streets and praying for work availed nothing.

The fuel gave out and the children were cold. Sometimes they were hungry, but they were the bravest little tots the writer has ever seen and they made no sign.

THEY ASKED FOR BREAD NO MORE.

After a few times they noticed that their mother cried when they asked for bread, and that their young father dropped his head on his arms and could not talk to them or play with them. They never asked again unless the food was in sight and they knew it was there for them.

They have the faces and manners of a prince and princess—this five-year-old boy and his three-year-old sister. His tiny torn cap is lifted from his head whenever he enters a room, and his treatment of his sister is as gentle as Little Lord Fauntleroy's could have been.

They probably cannot understand why they should feel hungry and why they may not have something to eat, but they ask no questions.

"God loves us, doesn't he?" asks Archie occasionally. And then softly to his sister, "When I'm big I'll buy bread and cakes for you."

The climax came yesterday noon. The Clarks owed $1 on last month's rent and for March up to date—some $5 or $6 in all. They received a notice of eviction last Friday, but appealed for and were granted one day of grace.

Marshal Lusk knew of the case and of the four children. He also knew that the baby was sick with croup. Consequently he did not come until yesterday. But when he came he did his unpleasant duty. There was no harshness, no severity of manner, but the few bits of furniture which had not been pawned were carried downstairs and placed on the sidewalk, and the wife, the baby, with the three children who clung to her skirts, were turned out of doors together.

OUT UPON THE SIDEWALK.

To the children it was rather a pleasant affair. There was lots of noise and bustle, which delighted them, and it was funny to see the little old stove taken to pieces and carried down stairs. They did not see the tears on their mother's cheeks, or understand why she held them so closely when she took them in her arms. Little Fanny took care of the baby. Her tiny arms hardly reached around the bundled infant, but she patted its back in a motherly way and chattered cheerfully about the "moving."

Mrs. Clark had a dime and the eye of Archie fell upon it.

"Shall I go an' buy quarter pound of sugar an' an ounce of tea?" he suggested, mildly.

The motion was seconded and carried, and young Archibald started off. There were a few hard rolls left and on these the family feasted.

Joe was the person most to be pitied. He stood near by, with his teeth set and wearing the expression which settles on a man's face only once or twice in a lifetime. He spoke once and that was when Fannie came to him and laid her cheek against his knee. The hand he laid on her head trembled.

"We've seen some hard times," he said, "but this is the worst. I have seen it coming, and I've lain awake all night long, after hunting for work all day, and have pictured it to myself. It's been a sort of nightmare that has haunted me. Oh, if I could only find something to do!"

The last sentence was as sincere as any prayer that ever ascended. Later in the day he said to the writer:

WHO WILL GIVE HIM "A CHANCE?"

"I will do any work in the world that is honest. I will clean streets or break stones or work twenty hours a day, if necessary. Speak to some one about me. Give me a chance and I'll show that I deserve it. I am a plumber and gasfitter by trade, but I can do roofing or turn my hand to almost anything—and I'll work with all my heart."

Then the doors were locked, and Joe and his family were out on the street with their helpless little children around them.

Joe Clark's face shows him to be an honest, straightforward, temperate young fellow. He is in bad odor with his landlords, Friedmann & Wentz, because he cannot pay his rent, but there is no one else to say a word against him.

There must be work for such a man in a city like New York, and THE WORLD will gladly communicate with anyone who is willing to give him the chance he asks. There are many cases of eviction in this city weekly, but there are none more deserving of public sympathy and assistance than this. The Clarks ask only to be put in a way to help themselves.