TRUE STORIES OF THE NEWS.

ONLY A HUSBAND GONE.

One of Hundreds of Such Cases in This Big Town, but That Doesn't Make It Any Easier for Poor Mrs. Burns and Her Five Little Children.

Nobody Knows Why or Where Coachman Burns Has Fled, and but for a Modern Fairy the Wife and Her Hungry Children Would Have Been Put Upon the Street.

Up on the second story of the three-story red brick house No. 219 East Seventy-eighth street, on the east side of the hallway, there's a neat flat of four large rooms. The kitchen stove shines, the floors are white, the bed in the middle room is neatly made, the windows are curtained. Comfort and respectability and woman's hard and patient work are evidenced on every side, and as to the five fat, well-washed, handsome, laughing children, they look as if they never had cried in all their short lives.

And they did not cry yesterday. But their mother did. She cried many times yesterday.

For her husband, James Burns, went away two weeks ago and she does not expect him to come back now, and she's sick with worrying and fretting and afraid that she'll have to "put her children away"—that greatest of terrors that haunts east side mothers whose husbands are unfaithful.

It was on Wednesday, Jan. 28, that James Burns, coachman, employed by Simon Borg, of No. 4 East Sixty-eighth street, left his home, wife and babies.

There had been no quarrel, nor had anything happened anywhere in that part of James's life with which his wife is familiar that helps her to understand why he went.

But James had been drinking a little at nights after his work was over and on Wednesday afternoon, for the first time, Mrs. Burns went to Mr. Borg's house. She thought that if she told Mrs. Borg that James spent time and money in drinking saloons Mr. or Mrs. Borg would speak to James and he would ever afterwards behave himself.

AN UNFORTUNATE MEETING FOR MRS. BURNS.

Just as she was walking up the front steps of Mr. Borg's house her husband drove up in front of the door. He had been driving up and down the street, waiting for Mrs. Borg and the children to come and take a drive. He saw his wife and his face darkened. He wheeled the carriage about, drove it to Nason's livery stable, corner of Fourth avenue and Seventy-eighth street, put it back in the stable, changed his clothes for the natty business suit he wears when off duty and walked to his home two blocks away.

When his wife got back she found him in his bedroom changing his collar. He had packed his clothes and a few personal possessions in a hand-bag.

She asked him no questions, so she says, and he had not a word to say till he had brushed himself, looked in the mirror and picked up the hand-bag.

Then he said:

"I'm going boarding. I could never face Mrs. Borg again."

"Won't you look after the children?" pleaded Mrs. Burns.

"When I get another job I will," he said, and walked out.

Mrs. Burns says that's all she knows and that's all that happened—absolutely all.

She's a tall, dark woman, with hard hands that speak of toil. She's thirty-five years of age and may have been pretty once, but the care of five children—Patrick, aged five; Mamie, four; Lizzie, three; James, two, and a two-months-old baby—and the hard work of housekeeping all alone, with only one pair of hands to do everything, are not conducive to the preservation of beauty.

As to James, he is a handsome fellow—fair-haired, finely built, blond mustache, military in bearing and so young looking that no one would suspect him of being thirty-eight, as he really is.

When James walked out of his home with his travelling bag in his hand Mrs. Burns did not believe he meant to desert her. She thought that he would come back. And she slept easily that night. But the next night was different. And the night after that was still worse.

She grew frightened, for she learned that after James had put the carriage away in the stable and calmly walked out of his home with his hand-bag, without any other word to his wife and children than "I'm going boarding," he had visited No. 20 Nassau street, where Mr. Borg is in business as a broker, and had asked for and received $50. It was so near the end of the month that Mr. Borg made out a check for James without any question.

And the first of February had come, and there was no money in the house, and the five children had to be fed. Then Mrs. Burns began to cry. Her sister, who has been employed in Jay Gould's family, came to see her, being summoned by a pretty but sharp-faced old lady of fourteen years, who has great knowledge of the world.

Mrs. Burns's sister was angry when she heard what had happened.

"Let him go," she said. "He is a brute to desert you with the baby at your breast. Let him go: you're well rid of him if he will do such things. You're not the first woman who has had to put her children away."

The little brunette old lady of fourteen years, with the sharp oval face and big brown eyes, sitting perched on a chair with her chin on her hands, looking away down into the depths of thought-land, gave similar counsel, but added:

"You might give him another trial, though, if he comes back and starts in good, because he was always a quiet, good man, and I don't think he did it on purpose."

But all this did not comfort Mrs. Burns or feed the children; she cried all night and her eyes could hardly be seen in the morning, they were so dull and small and red.

NO MONEY AND THE RENT WAS DUE.

There was no money—no money. And the rent was due and not a cent to pay it with, and the sky was very black.

Even her visitor, the wise little brunette old lady of fourteen years, sitting perched upon the chair, couldn't help her. And her sister couldn't help her, for there is an old father who has to be supported and a brother crippled by a fall.

She tried to take in washing, but with five small children clinging to you, how are you going to do much of anything? It was evident she was fighting a losing battle and could never make up the rent.

On Feb. 2, at 10 o'clock in the morning, the dreaded time arrived. The landlord's agent called for the rent, and Mrs. Burns for the first time in her life had to confess herself unable to pay.

Now, landlords' agents may have their feelings, but business is business, and must be done in business fashion. If you can't pay your rent you must get out.

There was no need to tell Mrs. Burns this, nor was she told this. She knew it and confessed the equity of the situation, and if she could have got her head clear and stopped crying she would have carried her possessions down to the sidewalk and gathered her children about her.

Well, she didn't know what she would have done after that. The choice seemed so hard—to put them away from her or see them starve before her eyes.

THE ADVENT OF A FAIRY IN THE NICK OF TIME.

Suddenly the door opened and somebody came in.

It was a fairy, a beautiful fairy.

There are people who pretend that fairies always have golden hair and blue eyes like German dolls, but this is a most ridiculous error. Some of the most beautiful fairies that ever lived have been brunettes.

And the little old lady, aged fourteen, who is Mrs. Burns's patron and counsellor, who sits with her chin on her hand looking deep in thought-land and culling wisdom on the subject of man and how to manage him, knows this to be true.

For the fairy who opened Mrs. Burns's door was a brunette with large, liquid, brown eyes and dark hair and full arching brows, and—oh! it was a beautiful face, beautiful in every detail, and kindness shone from it.

And the fairy paid the rent, and the agent went away, and then the little old lady, aged fourteen, saw the fairy do something a fairy never did before. It drew the children to it and cried over them and said:

"Your children shall never want for bread."

And the fairy and Mrs. Burns sat side by side, and the fairy cried and wiped its eyes and said the children were dear little things, and as handsome as any in all New York, and that their father was a good man, she was sure he was a good man, and had been carried away by an impulse and could be brought back to his neat home.

The fairy kissed all the children and held them in its arms, and just cried and cried.

A VERY PRACTICAL FAIRY.

And by and by the little old lady of fourteen years, with the observant brown eyes, saw that it wasn't a fairy at all, but a beautiful lady, who sat mingling her tears with those of her coachman's wife. And the sight affected the little old lady so that she came very near losing her dignity. This was a passing sensation. Yet she found thought-land strangely full of sunshine when she got her gaze well focussed to look far down into it again.

The giver had that wonderful art that no college can teach—giving without hurting. And she has kept her word—the children want for nothing. They were as merry and round-faced yesterday as on the day their father left them. The little old lady knows Mrs. Borg well now, and wonders how she ever took her to be a fairy and how it is that, though the mother of a grown-up family, Mrs. Borg looks younger than her big nineteen-year-old son:

"As if she wasn't married at all, you know."

NO ONE KNOWS THE WHY OR WHEREFORE.

Just why James Burns went away is something nobody knows. Mr. Borg can't tell. James always attended strictly to business and was a model during the five years he was in Mr. Borg's employ. He was one of the best coach-drivers in the city, according to his late employer, and could get immediate employment if he turned up again. Mrs. Burns had complained once before of James's drinking habits, and at her request and with James's consent Mr. Borg had been in the habit of sending James's wages, $60 per month, home to his wife. James agreed to this arrangement, saying that this would keep him from wasting money.

All accounts, except that of the Borgs themselves, agree in one thing. Burns had one of the best places of the sort in the city. The Borgs are constant in their kindness and stand ever ready to aid their help in every possible way in all their seasons of distress. Their affectionate interest is returned. James had the strongest regard for every member of the family. Whatever drinking he did must have been very light, for he drove his mistress and her children about every day for hours at a time, and in five years they never once detected a sign of liquor.

What was it, then, that drove him to leave home so hastily, yet with such evident determination to stay away?

He said to his wife: "I can never look Mrs. Borg in the face again."

To James Quinn, who keeps the Horseshoe, corner of Third avenue and Seventy-eighth street, he said: "I'm in trouble and I'm going to settle it with this," and he held up a roll of bills. There was $150 in the roll. He had spoken to Quinn before of this "trouble" and there is a girl or a woman in it.

But whether it is some rich man's daughter, aged fourteen, as one rumor has it, or a French nurse maid with $500 or any of the other women and girls favored by various rumors, nobody knows.

And where the extra $100 came from that Burns displayed to Quinn when he said he was going to settle his "trouble" is another mystery.

But there's no mystery about poor Mrs. Burns, with her five little children, left to fight the battle for bread alone in the big city.