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, by Konrad Bercovici**

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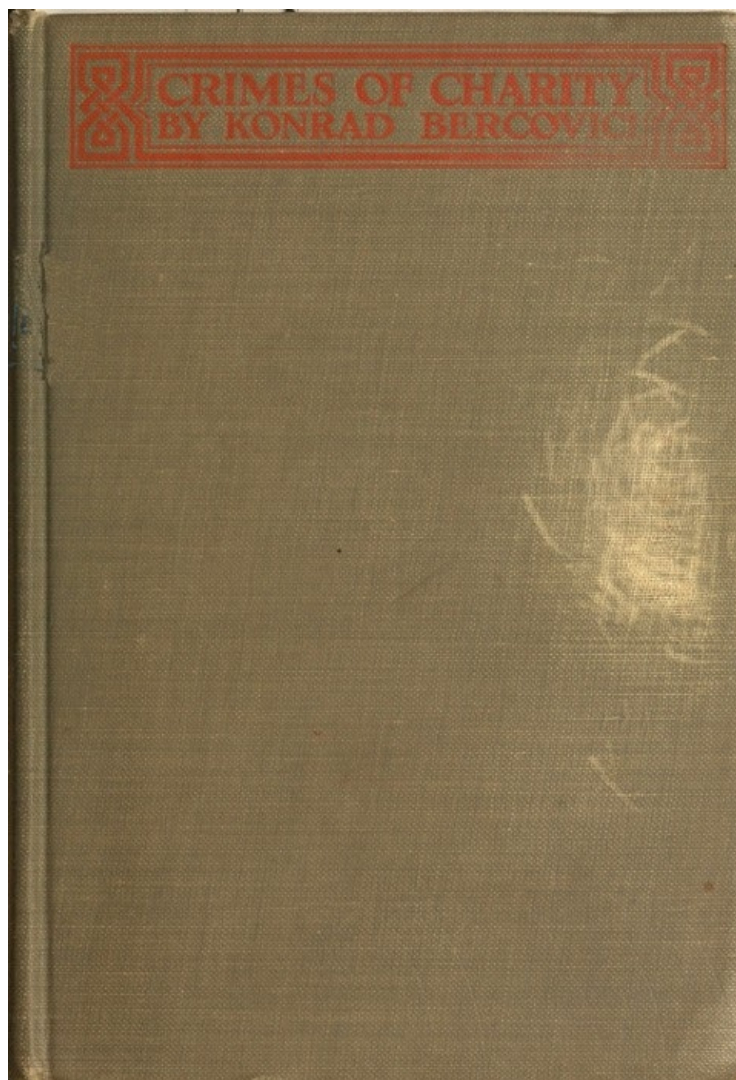
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CRIMES OF CHARITY



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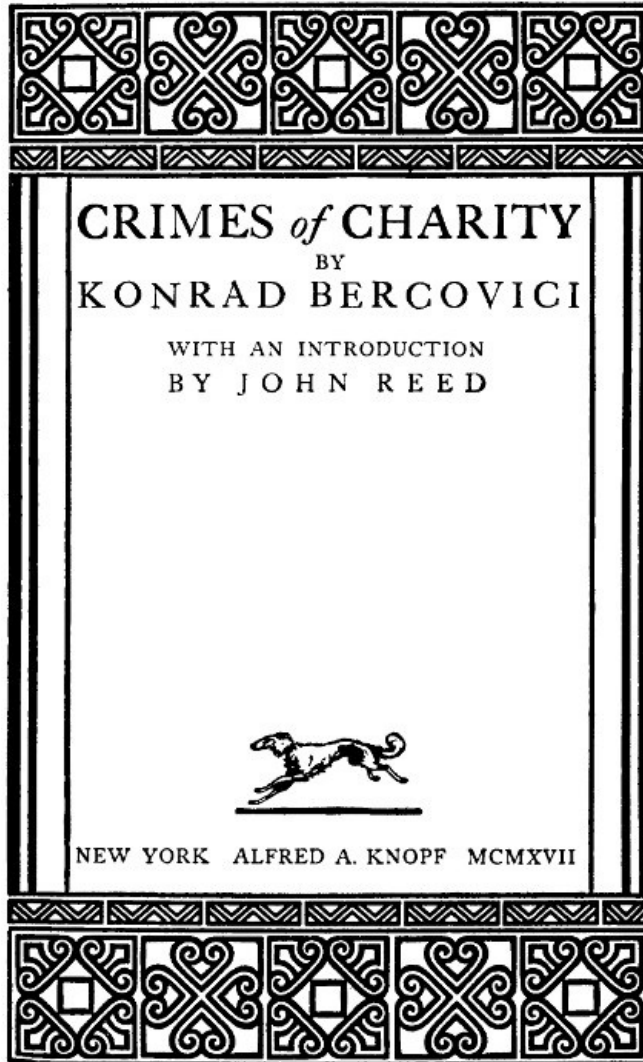
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CRIMES *of* CHARITY

BY
KONRAD BERCOVICI

WITH AN INTRODUCTION
BY JOHN REED

NEW YORK ALFRED A. KNOPF MCMXVII

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To my Naomi

INTRODUCTION

There is a literary power which might be called Russian—a style of bald narration which carries absolute conviction of human character, in simple words packed with atmosphere. Only the best writers have it; this book is full of it. I read the manuscript more than a year ago, and I remember it chiefly as a series of vivid pictures—a sort of epic of our City of Dreadful Day. Here we see and smell and hear the East Side; its crowded, gasping filth, the sour stench of its grinding poverty, the cries and groans and lamentations in many alien tongues of the hopeful peoples whose hope is broken in the Promised Land. Pale, undersized, violent children at play in the iron street; the brown, steamy warmth of Jewish coffee-houses on Grand Street; sick tenement rooms quivering and breathless in summer heat—starkly hungry with the December wind cutting through broken windows; poets, musicians, men and women with the blood of heroes and martyrs, babies who might grow up to be the world's great—stunted, weakened, murdered by the unfair struggle for bread. What human stories are in this book! What tremendous dramas of the soul!

It is as if we were under water, looking at the hidden hull of this civilization. Evil growths cling to it—houses of prostitution, sweat-shops which employ the poor in their bitter need at less than living wages, stores that sell them rotten food and shabby clothing at exorbitant prices, horrible rents, and all the tragi-comic manifestations of Organised Charity.

Every person of intelligence and humanity who has seen the workings of Organised Charity, knows what a deadening and life-sapping thing it is, how unnecessarily cruel, how uncomprehending. Yet it must not be criticised, investigated or attacked. Like patriotism, charity is respectable, an institution of the rich and great—like the high tariff, the open shop, Wall street, and Trinity Church. White slavery recruits itself from charity, industry grows bloated with it, landlords live off it; and it supports an army of officers, investigators, clerks and collectors, whom it systematically debauches. Its giving is made the excuse for lowering the recipients' standard of living, of depriving them of privacy and independence, or subjecting them to the cruelest mental and physical torture, of making them liars, cringers, thieves. The law, the police, the church are the accomplices of charity. And how could it be otherwise, considering those who give, how they give, and the terrible doctrine of "the deserving poor"? There is nothing of Christ the compassionate in the immense business of Organised Charity; its object is to get efficient results—and that means, in practise, to just keep alive vast numbers of servile, broken-spirited people.

I know of publishers who refused this book, not because it was untrue, or badly written; but because they themselves "believed in Organised Charity." One of them wrote that "there must be a bright side." I have never heard the "bright side." To those of us who know, even the Charity organisation reports—when they do not refuse to publish them—are unspeakably terrible. To them, Poverty is a crime, to be punished; to us, Organised Charity is a worse one.

JOHN REED.

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CRIMES OF CHARITY

[Pg 1]

CRIMES OF CHARITY

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THE STOVE—A PARABLE

There was once a man with a merciful heart who had a large fortune, and when he died he left much gold to his brother to use as he wished, and an additional amount in trust, to succour the poor. In his will he wrote:

"Build a big house and put therein a big stove and heat the stove well. On the door thou shalt put a sign in red letters that shall read: 'Ye poor of the land, come in and warm your bodies; ye hungry of the land, come and get a bowl of warm wine and a loaf of bread.' This will be my monument. I want no tombstone on the grave wherein my body will lie. Dust unto dust descends, but my soul will be alive in the blessings of the poor."

Peacefully the man died. They buried him in a lonely place under a tree.

Then the brother brought masons and carpenters and built a big house of stone, as was written in the will, and when the house was finished he called a painter and had painted in letters, red and big, so they could be seen from very far, the words his brother had written: "Ye poor of the land, come in and warm your bodies; ye hungry of the land, come and get a bowl of warm wine and a loaf of bread." And every one admired the good deed and many other rich men prepared their wills so as to provide help for the poor, that they might live eternally in their blessings.

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The next day, when the stove, the big stove, was put in, the brother of the dead threw the doors open for a feast to the rich. And they all blessed the dead because of his goodness to the poor.

On the third day the doors were opened to the poor, and it so happened that the locusts had eaten up the wheat on the fields that year, so that there were many without bread and who had to seek shelter in other places. They passed by the red sign and came in to warm themselves and eat, and though busy with their own sorrows they blessed the dead one.

Many were the bowls of wine and loaves of bread given to the poor. But the brother was greedy and wanted all for himself, so day and night his constant thought was how to comply with the will of his brother and the sign on the door and yet not give bread and wine to the poor. He read the will again and the devil fastened him to the word "stove," and the devil within him said: "Stove—stove—the stove will save you."

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Greed sharpened his wits and the next morning he rose early and made a big fire and closed all the windows and doors. When the poor came to warm themselves the heat would chase them out again, and instead of blessing they cursed the dead who had so artfully attracted them into the house, only to torture them with the heat of the room. The wine would remain untasted and the bread untouched.

The poor of the land spoke:

"Are we to be punished because the locusts ate our grain?"

And the house is called "the Devil's Spot." The wanderer freezes on the snow-covered field, the poor starve in their huts, but they take not the bread. And one day, a child said: "See! the sign! the red letters are written with blood."

In a lonely place is the forgotten grave of a merciful man.

On a lonely road is a house, where the poor dare not enter, and on the big stove stands the devil, and laughs and laughs. And when one asked him why he laughed the devil showed his teeth and answered: "This is the best place that ever man built for me."

MY FIRST IMPRESSION

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I was ushered into the private office of the Manager of the Charity Institution. He was writing at his desk with his back towards the door. He did not turn when we came in. My protector, Mr. B., who obtained this job for me as special investigator, coughed a few times to attract the Manager's attention. Finally the gentleman turned around.

"Oh, how do you do? I did not know you were in the office at all! I am so busy, you see."

I well knew that he was aware of our presence, because he had sent the office boy to call us.

"And who is this gentleman?" he asked, turning in his chair and scrutinising me from head to foot.

Mr. B. introduced me, added a few complimentary remarks as to my ability and honesty, and finished with, "I know he's just the man we want."

The Manager, Mr. Rogers, kept on looking at me while the other spoke, and having most probably satisfied himself that I was all right, nodded to Mr. B., rang for the office boy and called in the Assistant Manager, to whom he in turn introduced me, finishing with, "Don't you think that he'll do?" To which the Assistant Manager respectfully assented.

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"In fact," Mr. Rogers said to the Assistant Manager, "Mr. Lawson, I think I'll give him over to you."

"Sir," he again addressed me, "you are under the orders of Mr. Lawson. You will report to him, take his orders, his advice, and I hope that everything will be right." As he finished he politely led us to the door. "Good-bye, sir. Let's hope you will accomplish the right kind of work for us."

We entered the office of the Assistant Manager. Mr. B. soon excused himself and left the room. Mr. Lawson let me wait fully ten minutes before he addressed a word to me. He busied himself with the different papers in the pigeon holes of his desk, but this was only pretence, I felt right along, to impress me with his superior rank.

After having satisfied himself that he had accomplished this, he said to me, still looking at the papers:

"Why don't you sit down? Sit down, sir."

There was no chair except the one right near his desk, so I had to remain standing.

"What's your name?"

"Baer, Baer."

"Oh, yes," and he offered the chair near his desk. I had hardly seated myself when he stood up, and making a wry face said:

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"I haven't any time to-day to give you instructions. We'll leave it for to-morrow. Meanwhile, I'll turn you over to Mr. Cram. He might be of use to you, as he has had a great deal of experience in this line of work."

He rang for the office boy. "Call Mr. Cram," was the order. A few seconds later Mr. Cram, a young man of about twenty, appeared. Mr. Lawson introduced me and told Cram to keep me at his desk for the afternoon. It was one o'clock.

We passed through all the offices, where he introduced me to a few of the other employees, and then proceeded to the basement.

The place was in half darkness, cold and dreary, and I stumbled along. Near the windows, towards the street, was a desk, and near the desk a gas oven. Cram put a chair near the desk, and as my eyes became accustomed to the semi-darkness I began to distinguish men, women and children sitting on the benches at the farther end of the cellar.

Mr. Cram again inquired my name, remembered that he had read some of my stories, shook hands again with me and added that he was himself a "red hot Socialist," "a reformer" of the real kind, and he grew very friendly. I had lit a cigarette, but seeing a "No smoking" sign I put it out.

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"Why don't you smoke?" he asked, filling his pipe. I pointed to the sign. "That is not for us," he said, shrugging his shoulders and pointing to the people who were sitting at the farther end of the room. "That's for the applicants—for the rabble, you know."

I refused to smoke. He sat at his desk, fumbled in the pigeon-holes for awhile, then sat back in his chair and puffed dreamily at his pipe for a few moments, following with his eyes the smoke-rings. Then he called out unconcernedly:

"Grun!"

Nobody answered.

"Grun!" he called again, this time louder.

"What's the matter? Grun! Grun!" and putting his pipe down on the desk he stood up and looked over to where the "rabble" sat.

"Whose name is Grun? Grun?"

A man of about forty stood up and asked: "Grun? Did you call Grun?"

Mr. Cram looked him straight in the face.

"Can't you hear?" he thundered. "Can't you hear when I call? Come here—you."

"Ha?" the applicant queried submissively.

"Can't you hear?" and turning to me he said: "You see? that's how they are! Spite-workers. He'll let me call ten times, as though I was the applicant and not he; they are all the same, vicious scoundrels—derelicts, beggars, rascals. You'll see what a damned lie he'll put up." [Pg 10]

He sat back on his chair and read the application a few times.

"How old are you?"

"Ha?" the poor man queried again, putting a hand to his ear and bending over the desk.

"Are you crazy? Don't you understand? How old are you?" And addressing me again he said: "A fine job, isn't it?"

"Ha? speak a little louder. I'm hard of hearing," the applicant begged.

"Write down your questions," I suggested, giving the man pencil and paper.

"Oh! I see!" Cram said, "you have no experience. Do you really think that he cannot hear? It's a fake—a fake. He hears better than you and I. It's a fake—a rotten old trick. I tell you, it's some job I have."

"But maybe he is deaf," I insisted.

Mr. Cram looked at me with scorn, and turning to the applicant he shouted at the top of his voice:

"How old are you?"

"A little louder," the man begged.

The investigator puffed at his pipe in disgust, and after my insistence consented to write down his questions.

"How long have you been deaf?" he wrote down. [Pg 11]

"I have just been discharged from the hospital," the man answered. "They made an operation on my ears."

"You see?" I put in.

"Oh! it's all a fake—a rotten old fake. He hears better than you and I, I tell you," Cram still insisted.

"Have you a doctor's certificate?" I wrote on a slip, handing it to the applicant.

Quickly the man fumbled at his vest pocket, to prove his case, but Cram did not want to be convinced. With a movement of his hand he stopped the man.

"It's all right. We know it all. It's all a fake, I tell you, Mr. Baer. They get certificates for fifty cents."

I looked up at the applicant. His face betrayed no sign that he heard what had just been said, and I thought it fortunate for the "red hot Socialist."

Cram put his application in a pigeon-hole and told the man to go home. The man did not move, but fixed questioning eyes on Cram's lips, seeking to understand.

"Go home," the other yelled. He showed no sign of understanding except that he knew he was addressed. "Ha?" he queried.

"Go to hell," Cram answered. [Pg 12]

I wrote upon a piece of paper: "Go home, the gentleman says."

"I have no home," he quickly answered.

"You hear?" I turned to Cram.

"If he has no home let him go and get one," was the angry retort.

"Therefore he applied to charity," I permitted myself to say.

"This is no place for vagabonds," Cram explained, without looking at me. "He must have an address so we can send an investigator and see whether it is a worthy case."

"Well, but if he has no home?"

"Then he cannot obtain charity. This is our rule."

Again Cram fumbled in his desk, gave the man back his application and wrote on top of it: "Go upstairs."

With a stupid look on his face the man stood with the paper in hand and did not know what to do or what it all meant. Cram showed him the door. The man stood stupidly. Cram rang a bell—an office boy came. "Lead him upstairs," was the order; "he's deaf."

The office boy took the man by the hand. "Come on upstairs," and jokingly to Cram, "They have spread the table for you there."

Soon I heard his heavy steps on the stairs.

"Will they give him something upstairs?" I inquired.

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"They'll give him in the neck," he laughed. "They'll put him out."

"Why don't you help him? The charities are here for that," I said.

"My dear friend, you don't understand this business yet," the investigator said. "We don't take stock in his deafness. It's a fake, an old trick."

"Yes, but his certificate proves something, doesn't it?"

"I didn't see it," Cram answered.

"But he wanted to show it to you, did he not?"

"Yes, but I did not want to see it. It's all a fake. Wait, when you have been in the business long enough you will not speak that way." Again he fumbled in his desk.

I looked at him. He had eyes, a nose and a mouth—a face—yet he did not look human to me. What was missing anyway? And as I did not then know what charities were really for, I thought at that moment:

"This place is for a human being with a big heart, that could feel the pain of every sufferer—a human being with a desire to help his fellow creatures—who would speak to him who comes to apply for help words that would be like balsam, who would feel ashamed that he has a home and bread to eat while others are walking the streets, hungry and homeless. Surely 'upstairs' they do not know how this man treats the applicants. They surely don't know—they don't know."

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Presently a young girl, an employee of the office, came to Cram's desk and said a few words to him. His face lit up and became human, his voice sounded sweet, and there was so much affection in the look he gave her that I was astonished. I had just thought of him as a brute. He had just behaved so to the old man. But as the rays of the sun from the little window fell on them both it lit my heart with hope. "He is too young—he will learn the truth in time," I thought.

No sooner had the girl gone away than his face again took on a stony composure, and when he again called out the name of an applicant his voice was again harsh and cold as iron.

"Roll—Ida Roll, come here."

A woman, shabbily dressed, with her face almost covered by the big shawl she wore over her head and shoulders, approached the desk. Cram looked at her for a few seconds. A tremor passed through the woman's frame at his scrutiny. She bit her lips and nervously rubbed her hands against the desk.

"What's your name?"

"Ida Rohl."

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Cram made a little mark on the application.

"Where do you live?"

"Madison Street—No.—"

"Where does your brother live?"

"I have no brother."

"Where does your sister live?"

"I have no sister."

"How much does your oldest son earn a week?"

"My oldest son is only thirteen years old."

"What's the name of your husband?"

"My husband is dead."

"When did he die?"

"Four years ago."

"Did you marry again?"

"No, sir."

"Mind you," he warned her, "we are going to investigate and if we find out that you have married," and he shook his finger in her face.

"How many children have you?"

"Three—the oldest of them is thirteen."

"And how did you live till now without applying to charity?"

"I worked at the machine."

"Why don't you work now?" and turning to me he explained: "You see? Four years she has worked and supported herself. Now some one has told her of the existence of the charities, so she does not want to work any longer. She thinks she has a good case. A widow—three children—and," whispering in my ears in a confidential tone, "you'll hear her say soon that she is sick—sick—that's what they all claim. All are sick." Meanwhile he cleaned his pipe.

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"Well, why don't you answer? Why don't you work now? Tell me—did you get tired—or do you think begging a better trade?"

"I am sick."

Cram glanced at me as though to say, "You see."

"Sick? and what is your disease? Lazyo-mania?"

"No, I am sick," the woman said, her eyes swimming with tears.

"Sick—what sickness?"

"I am sick. I can't tell you what sickness. I worked at pants—an operator—and now I am sick. I have pains all over and I can't work. I can't—I won't mind it for me—but my children go to bed without supper and go to school without breakfast. And I can't stand it—I can't—I never applied to charities—"

"Enough, enough," Cram interrupted. "Never applied to charity! I know that gag. You shouldn't have applied now. A strong woman like you should be ashamed—ashamed to come here with the other beggars," sweeping his hand towards the others. "Go to work. You won't get a cent from here."

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"But I can't. I am sick."

"Go to a hospital if you can't work."

"And my children?" sobbed the poor mother.

"Well, then, what do you want? A pension of \$200 a month, a trip abroad, a palace, a country house? Say—say quickly what do you want? I have no time. You will get everything immediately. It's a fine job, Mr. Baer, is it not?"

"I want to be helped out until I am well enough to work. My children are hungry. They have had no breakfast to-day and there isn't any supper for them either."

"That's the real stuff—her children. The more kids, the easier the money. I tell you, some class to them, my friend."

Cram looked at her and then at the application, and after a moment's thought he wrote on top of it, in blue pencil:

"To be investigated."

"Go home," he said to the woman.

"But Mr. —"

"Go home, I say. We'll take care of it. That's all, don't stay here any longer, don't get me angry."

"But I told you my children are hungry and cold—"

"I am not a groceryman—go home. I have no time. There are others—also sick and with dead husbands and hungry children. Move on—good-day."

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"But, Mr.—to-night my children have no supper and it's bitter cold."

"All right. We'll take care of that. Go home." And as the woman tried to speak again: "Now go home and don't bother me."

Again he busied himself at the desk. The woman looked at him and then at me. Big, heavy tears rolled down her careworn cheeks and she seemed to me the very personification of suffering, the suffering of a mother who sees her children tortured by gnawing hunger. She went away.

"Will you immediately send an investigator?" I asked Cram.

"In four or five days. Our investigators are very busy now and it's very cold."

"Four or five days!" I was amazed. "And meanwhile, the children—what about the poor kids?"

"Oh, well—it's not as terrible as all that. I don't believe all she said," and again he repeated his favourite sentence: "I don't take any stock in her story. It's all a fake—a fake."

Many other women and men were called, but I did not see or hear them. These two were enough. Only the harsh and grating voice of Cram and the bitter outcry of some applicant awoke me from my stupor.

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THE SECOND DAY

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On returning home I went to my bed without supper. The whole night through I heard Cram's questions and the answers of the poor applicants, and the whole world appeared to me to be like one huge, bleeding wound. And the question came again and again to my mind: "Was charity, organised charity, the salve to heal this wound?"

I decided during the night not to accept my new job, but on the following morning I reconsidered the matter and went to work. "I will try to have this man Cram discharged," I promised myself. "I will speak to the Manager about the investigator's brutality. He is too busy upstairs. He evidently trusts the man and thinks that every one is treated kindly, humanely." And I explained to myself that the reason Cram was so cruel, though so young, was because of a few impostors who tried or succeeded in filching a few dollars from the charities. What they had to do was to remove him, as he was unfit for his office. It was the place for a woman, a big-hearted, kind old woman, who has seen much of life, who has herself perhaps at some time in her life been on the brink of misery, even compelled to apply herself to charities, and who would therefore understand the eyes full of tears, the quivering lips, the cry of the mother for her unfed children. Yes—a woman, a noble woman, instead of Cram, and everything would be all right, and as I walked towards the office I reviewed mentally all my acquaintances of the other sex, trying to place the one fit for the job. None was good enough, except one who would not accept it, my dear Joanna, with her silvery hair and the kind big, blue eyes. She had told me of her work in the Hull House in Chicago and with other charitable organisations in Boston and elsewhere.

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"Friend," she often said, "it's no place for a human being. You see too much misery, too much pretence, too much darkness." And only a few days before when I told her about my future position she had advised me not to take it.

"It will embitter you or it will ruin your soul. A body that has worked in such a place two years should be backed against a wall and shot in mercy, because they are disabled for life to feel humanly."

Still thinking of her words I entered the door of the Institution.

The doorkeeper asked me where I was going. "To the office," I explained, trying to pass, but he was in my way. He insolently put his hands on my shoulders. "Say—you—where are you hurrying? Wait here."

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"I want to see Mr. Lawson," said I, trying to pass.

"You can't see no one; go in the other room and write your application."

I shivered at the thought of the basement and almost forgot that I was an employee of the institution, when I saw Cram enter the door.

He came up, saluted me and told the man that it was "all right," that I was a new employee. The doorkeeper touched his cap in respect and retreated, excusing himself with the words, "I thought it was an applicant." How horrible this word sounded to me.

"Did you announce yourself to Mr. Lawson?" Cram asked. "Not yet," was my answer. "You'd better announce yourself to him," Cram advised. "Soon the applicants will come. We'll have a busy day. It's bitterly cold outside and on such days they come, oh! they come, they won't give you any peace, these scoundrels. We can't complain of lack of customers," he laughed, tapping my shoulder familiarly. "Say, Mr. Baer," he sniggered, "I'm supposed to be a 'red hot Socialist,' but I must confess that I hate the applicants. I hate them like hell. They have no manners; they

never go when you tell them. They sit and sit. Oh! I hate them—hate them," and he grimaced in disgust.

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Cram announced me to Mr. Lawson and I was soon called into the office. He invited me to sit down, asked me about my former occupations and then explained my work to me:

"Now," he said, "I hope you are aware of the fact that we send out investigators to investigate all the cases that we get. All our investigators are women, and women are very softhearted. Besides this we know that most of their information is not reliable, because they get the information from the applicants themselves, from their neighbours or their relatives. Now, the information given by the applicant is worthless. The neighbour is very often on good terms with the applicant, and as to their relatives, they always give us only the poor ones, they never give us the wealthy ones. Now we have six hundred pension cases; six hundred people that get relief every month for their rent and food. We want these cases to be re-investigated; the information not to come from the applicant or neighbours who know that you are an investigator of the charities. In some way you might find out—posing as a pedlar, as a health officer, a friend of the family, or any other way you want."

"So," I interrupted, "what you want is a detective," and I intended to tell him that I was not going to be one, but he quickly assented. "Yes, we want you to be a detective. You'll do good work. We have a limited amount of money to spend and if some people get a pension without exactly needing it they take the money from another family that is really starving and whom we can't help at all."

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This struck me very convincingly. I had no more scruples and I decided to accept the job.

"We'll give you five names and addresses and you'll have to find out all the rest yourself. We want to know everything that the family does; who their relatives are and how much money comes into the house. None of the investigators should know anything about your work—keep it secret." A few minutes later he gave me five addresses, and wishing me "good-luck," he escorted me to the door.

Once outside I thought the matter over again. I seemed to be stranded in a treacherous swamp in which I was sinking deeper and deeper, but Mr. Lawson's argument that those who did not need charity were taking away the bread of the needy appealed very strongly to me and I made up my mind to go ahead.

Before starting on my work I entered a coffee house on the lower east side and tried to warm myself with a cup of coffee. Several times I made up my mind to send the addresses back with my resignation, but the argument that the impostor was getting money which should go to the needy was convincing. It seemed as though I heard Mr. Lawson repeating it over and over again. His fine blond face full of stern pity. Not the sentimental pity that lights up the features for a moment, but the pity of the man who has devoted his whole life to helping the poor. Certainly Mr. Lawson has no other reason. He wants to repair the evils of our present system. He cannot cure, he cannot eradicate all the evil, but to lessen the suffering of the poor is surely a good work. And Mr. Rogers, that polite gentleman, the Manager. He too is busy all day helping the poor. Why should I shirk because Cram was not of the right stuff? Thus I reasoned: "He is not the whole institution. You will explain to the gentlemen and they will discharge him." I was soon quiet again and out in the street.

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AT WORK

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The nearest address was in the lower part of Madison Street. Mary D—, a widow. The house was one of the typically dirty tenements of that section. As I entered the hall a strong odour of garlic and onions almost suffocated me. I rang the janitress' bell. She opened the door and as soon as I mentioned the name of Mary D. she knew I was from the charities, for she immediately began to tell me that the D.'s have no coal, that the charities have neglected them, that the woman is sick and the five children, the oldest of whom is eleven years old, are hungry and naked.

"But, my dear lady, I'm not from the charities. I'm a sewing machine agent," I lied, according to the advice of Mr. Lawson.

"Oh! a new agent? Why, she has just paid \$1 last week on the machine," and with changed attitude: "What do you bother me for? Go upstairs and see her—third floor back left." She re-entered her apartment. I walked up the three floors. At the door I stood a little and thought how I should behave. "Who's there?" a voice asked. "Sewing machine agent," I answered, timidly.

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"Come next week—I have no money," was the reply. "Excuse me. I can't open the door for you now. I am not dressed, Mr. George."

I went downstairs and in the hall I noted down everything that the janitress had told me. Five children, no coal, no food, \$11.50 rent, and so on.

My next address was in Henry Street.

It was one of the coldest days of the winter of 1911. The snow was knee-deep and the icy wind blew at a terrific speed. The house where I had to go was one of those old, decrepit buildings, where misery lurks and peers at one from every door, every brick, windowpane, nail and knob. The windows were covered with a coat of ice. Some broken panes were stuffed with pillows and rags. On the ground floor was a grocery. "They surely buy their provisions here," I thought, and entered the store. An old woman, the storekeeper, asked me what I wanted.

"Could you give me any information about the family S.," I asked.

"Oh!" she exclaimed, "you are from the Gerry Society, aren't you?"

"Well?" I said nonchalantly. "What of it?"

"Well—it's all a lie, that's what I could tell you. The poor woman does her best. Why! she works herself to death. A widow with three small children—a fine woman, a good mother, a real lady, if you want to know. But her neighbour, the rag pedlar's wife, is jealous. I don't know why! And she did it. Why should you take away the children from a mother? She feeds them well. The children haven't good clothes! Well, she is a poor woman and children are children. They wear, they tear; what can she do? Buy every day new clothes? A poor widow that works from early morning till late at night!"

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"What is the name of the rag pedlar?" I asked the woman.

"Goldberg," she informed me. "A bad woman, without a mother's heart. Don't go to her. She'll tell you a lot of bad things about the poor widow. Don't go to her, Mister. Oh! that such beings should be alive at all!" she muttered in Yiddish.

"I have to," I assured her, and after inquiring the floor where Mrs. Goldberg lived I walked up the three flights. I knocked at the door.

"Come in," came the answer. Mrs. Goldberg opened the door, and as I entered the cheerful aspect of a tidy kitchen and the singing of the boiling pots on the stove greeted me invitingly. Mrs. Goldberg bade me enter their "front room," furnished pretentiously. I sat down at her invitation, and contrary to all rules on such occasions I waited for her to start the discussion—I hardly knew what to say. I did not have to wait long. Mrs. Goldberg immediately asked me if I was an agent from the Gerry Society.

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"But what have you against that poor woman? Why do you want her children taken away? Are you not a mother? Have you no feeling? What is it? Have you a personal grievance against the woman?" I said in the tone to invite confidences.

"But just because I am a mother," she snapped back angrily, her eyes flashing. "Come here," she said, making a sign for me to follow her. I followed her into a third room. A boy of about six years was in a bed. His face was burning with fever. Around his neck he had bandages, and on a small table were a dozen bottles of medicine.

"Well, what has that to do with it?" I queried.

"This is my only child," she explained. I did not understand what connection there was between her sick child and the desire to put the children of the other mother away. I told her so, energetically, almost insolently.

"You see," she explained, "her children are always running around half naked and barefooted, even in the coldest weather. They are always sick, but she does not care, because when this is so she runs to all the charitable societies and gets help and medicine. The children play in the hall the whole day, and whenever her child has a sore throat three or four other children catch it. Last year two children caught diphtheria in this house. Both children died. When my child gets sick *I have to pay for medicine and the doctor and everything*. If she can't take care of her children, let her not have any—that's all. Each one for himself," she added; "I have to take care of my children."

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"But," I argued, "are you not a mother? What can the poor woman do?"

Mrs. Goldberg's eyes flashed, and with the assurance well-fed people generally have, she answered: "Oh! never mind! I would know how to take care of my children! There would be no charity business with me. Oh, no! I assure you!"

"She is a widow with small children," I pleaded. "What would you do in her place?"

"Oh, never mind. I would do something—anything—everything. My child will always have enough to eat and some clothes, as long as I live," and as she looked at the sick child she rolled up her sleeves as though ready to start a fight against the whole world to defend her child from want and misery.

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I departed, first assuring Mrs. Goldberg that something would be done to "protect her child," and went up another flight to see Mrs. S.

The grocery woman had probably announced the fact that the "Gerry Society man" was in the house, for as I passed through the hall many a door opened and closed. Some of the women eyed me as though I were a murderer, while others looked at me as though I were something

mysterious—a man who had the power of parting children from the mother. My position was not a very pleasant one. I thought of what I should do if the real "Gerry Society man" were to appear on the scene. I hastened towards Mrs. S.'s door. A few old women followed behind me. I knocked. A timid "Come in." As I opened the door I saw two small children, one probably six and the other four years old, hiding under the table. My heart contracted. Mrs. S. stood in front of the table, hiding the children, her open hands like the claws of a tigress, ready to defend her offspring. We looked at one another, mutely, for a few moments. Her eyes were sparkling with the fire of an injured animal, her hair was dishevelled, her brows were knit together in a supreme decision, her mouth twitched, and she was pale, pale as a waxen figure. From under the table the two children looked at me fearfully.

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"Are you Mrs. S.?" I finally stammered out, while I took out my notebook.

No answer.

"Are you Mrs. S.?" I repeated again, as I regained my composure.

"Don't take away my children, Mister. Don't take away my children," the poor mother yelled and growing hysterical she repeated this terrible cry in heartrending tones, tearing her hair. "Don't take them away."

The poor tots came out from under the table. Quickly she pushed them back, and continued to cry at the top of her voice the same sentence: "Don't take away my children. They are mine, mine. My God, they are mine."

"I don't want to take your children away, madam," I told her repeatedly. "Calm yourself, I did not come to take them away." But she did not listen to me. She kept on crying and tearing her hair. Neighbours came in from all sides.

"Help, help," Mrs. S. cried. "Help, help, mothers! He wants to take away my children. Help, help!" and she ran to the window.

I gently laid my hands on the hysterical mother's shoulders, and looking straight in her eyes I said slowly and distinctly:

"I—don't—want—to—take—your children. Be quiet," I begged. Among the neighbours was also the grocery woman.

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"He wouldn't take away your children. This gentleman comes to speak with you. Calm yourself, Mrs. S., calm yourself," and softly, in Yiddish, she blasphemed Mrs. Goldberg and her husband, father and child.

After a few moments, during which the grocery woman spoke to her in soothing tones, Mrs. S. quieted down a little. A reaction set in. Thick beads of cold sweat appeared on her brows, while her cheeks flushed with a sickly red. She asked for a glass of water and sat down. To express how I felt all this time is more than I can do. I only know that I went through some faint reflection of all the emotions that agitated the poor woman. I sat down opposite to her and tried to soothe her. She could not look me in the face. As I spoke her eyes caressed the two little children, who, during the excitement, had come out from their hiding place. They went to their mother. She placed them one on each side of her and passed her arms around their necks, presenting to me one of the strongest pictures of motherhood that I had ever seen.

"Well, how do you feel, Mrs. S.?" I broke the silence.

"Just a minute," was her answer, and she ran into the bedroom from where I heard her sobbing. I took advantage of her absence to ask the other neighbours to go out. They departed reluctantly and stood outside. I tried hard to make friends with the children. Not even my pennies would they accept, and soon they went into the bedroom with their mother—all sobbing together. I looked around the house. The stove was cold. The wind blew in from a broken window. A few crumbs of bread were on the table. A few broken chairs, a big clock, out of order, on the mantelpiece, a picture of a man of about thirty years old in the centre of a wall, this constituted most of the furniture. The whole house was in a state of complete disorder, with not even an attempt at cleanliness. Through the open door of the bedroom I saw two folding beds and the torn mattresses shed their straw all around the house. I felt very uneasy and wished to cut short my visit, but hardly knew how to back out of my position.

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"Mrs. S.," I called, "won't you please come out and talk matters over with me? I am pressed for time. It's one o'clock and I have other work to do."

The woman re-entered the kitchen, followed by the children. She had arranged her hair, put on shoes and buttoned her torn waist.

"Sit down," I urged. She did so.

"Now," I started, "what's the matter with your children? Why are they walking naked? It is a very cold day and they are liable to fall sick."

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"I am a poor widow," she started plaintively, "what can I do?"

"But listen here," I said, "this does not go! The children must be properly clad."

The woman looked me in the eyes for a few seconds, and then, all of a sudden, she asked me:

"Are you a Jew?"

"Yes," I said, "but what has that to do with it?"

She evidently heard only my acknowledgment that I was a Jew, and with the feeling that I was her brother she gained confidence that I would not take her children away from her.

"If you are a Jew," she continued, "you will not take my children away, and I will tell you the whole truth."

"Go ahead," I encouraged her, and she told me the following:

"Since my husband died three years ago, the charities have given me two dollars a week and paid my rent. Every year, in the winter, they have sent me coal and clothing for the children. This year they have a new investigator and she does not like me."

"The investigator does not like you?" I repeated. "Why?"

The woman looked away for a few moments, then she shrugged her shoulders and said: "I don't know why. She does not like me and that's all, so they sent me only a half ton of coal at the beginning of the winter and no clothes for the children. Every day I went to the office and asked and begged for coal and clothes, but the investigator does not like me—she does not like me—and she works against me. So what could I do? To go and buy shoes and coal I need money, and I haven't any. From the two dollars a week I get we hardly have enough for bread—dry bread." And as the poor woman pronounced the last word the smallest of the children repeated it in tones that would have melted a heart of stone. His hungry eyes appealed to the mother for the staff of life. "Bread," the older child repeated. "Mamma, give me bread. I am hungry—give me bread."

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The mother cried. The children were still asking for bread and the mother was still crying when a young lady, whom I recognised as an investigator from the charities, entered without even knocking at the door. Mrs. S. jumped up from her chair, very confused.

"Who is that man?" the investigator asked without even a greeting as she entered. The woman did not know what to do, what to answer.

"Who are you?" the investigator questioned me insolently.

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"By what right do you ask me that?" I replied. "I haven't asked you who you are."

"Well, I have a right to ask," and turning to the woman, she said: "You must tell me immediately who this man is—do you hear? Who is he? or no coal, no money, no rent—do you hear?" She yelled all this, shaking her jewelled finger in the woman's face. I would have liked to have seen how far she would have gone, but the eyes of the poor mother were so appealing, so full of despair, I went up to the investigator and showed her a paper with the heading of the institution.

"So, you are *it!*"

"Not a word," I said.

"It's all right." She turned to Mrs. S. "I know who he is. It's all right. Any coal left? No, well, you'll get your coal to-morrow."

"And shoes?" begged the woman.

"Bread, mamma," both children said at once, "ask her for bread, mamma."

This was too much for the well-fed investigator. "Oh, these beggars! these beggars!" she repeated. "Are you coming down soon?" she asked me, and without bidding Mrs. S. good-bye she went out, saying, "I'll wait for you downstairs. I'll have to talk matters over with you."

I assured Mrs. S. that I would do all in my power to prevent her children being taken from her, and I was soon downstairs, where I found Miss Alten waiting. We walked some distance together without speaking a word—just eyeing one another. We passed a lunch room. I asked her to have a cup of coffee, feeling sure she would refuse. To my great astonishment she accepted, and soon we were sitting at a table with the steaming coffee before us. The pleasant warmth of the place and the steam from the cups soon melted the ice. She was a handsome dark girl of about twenty, of Jewish-Russian descent. She had a pleasant voice, yet how harsh and cold was her speech awhile ago, exactly the same voice as Cram's. I wondered then! not now! Afterward I learned that this was the *professional tone*, the *intimidating note*, as Cram called it.

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"Why did you leave Mrs. S., that poor woman, without coal?" I asked. "It's so very cold and you know she has no money to buy any!"

"Oh! she's a pest," Miss Alten replied, making a grimace that passed like an ugly cloud of hatred over her young face. "That was to punish her, to show her that she must not disregard my authority," she continued. "Last month she finished the coal. When I came to see her she told me the story, and I told her she would get it next week. Instead of waiting, what do you think she did? She came up to the office to beg. So! I thought, you come to the office. Wait! you'll wait a month before you get any at all. And that is why it happened. To show her that I am the boss. We have to have some means of keeping them in order, you know."

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"Yes, but it is not fair to punish her. And for what? She felt cold, so did the children, and she's a mother. She was afraid of sickness for them. Why, great God, they could have died." Miss Alten

laughed at me long and scornfully.

"Die, die? Her children die? They never die. They never die. Their children never die, these beggars."

The coffee was finished. Miss Alten buttoned her coat, put on her gloves, and saying good-bye she quickly disappeared from the table. I sat more than an hour, drinking one cup of coffee after another. I wanted to think but my mind was in confusion. "They never die. They never die," rang in my ears. And to think that the wages of these women investigators are seldom higher than ten dollars per week, and that if somebody did not help them out, a brother, a sister, or father, they themselves would be depending on charity, or—

"I'll have her discharged, too," I finally decided, and with this determination I went out again into the street.

Aimlessly I walked through the slums. I had never taken so much interest in every minute detail of the street as I did at that time. Every house, every window, every door meant something, said something. Tales of untold misery and despair and shame. I looked at the clothes of all the children and tried to guess, figure out, which one's mother was an applicant and which was not. Unconsciously I had divided the world into two classes—one that applies to charity and one that does not.

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Then I made up my mind that Miss Alten was a relative, perhaps a sister, of Cram's, and I felt sorry that I had not asked her about it. In our discussion his name had been mentioned several times, and she had always affirmed that "he was the finest gentleman and the best investigator of the whole bunch."

How curious! Two such cruel beings in one charitable institution! I wondered.

My next case proved a very interesting one. It was in Monroe Street, on the fifth floor of a yard-house—Mrs. Miriam D.

As nobody around the neighbourhood wanted to tell me anything beyond the fact that Mrs. D. was a very honest women, I went up to the applicant at once. The mother was not at home: only her three children, a girl of twelve, another one of ten and a boy of seven years old were in the house. They sat, all three, around a table, and worked at their lessons. The kitchen was very clean and warm. The children were tidy, and everything was in order. But the poor girls were as pale as death. A single glance was enough to know that they were starved out. Only in their big, moist, Jewish eyes was there life. I asked the children where the mother was. "We don't know," was the response of all three, and they looked at one another as though to say, "I wish she were here."

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From my talk with the children I learned that they were expecting a cousin by the name of Leb from the old country, so I decided to impersonate an agent of Ellis Island and get all the information I wanted in that way. I asked the girls how they were living; whether they had things to eat every day.

"Yep," the boy of seven said, with pride. "But not enough," added the oldest sister.

"From where does your mother get money to buy food?" I queried.

"From the Charities," the second girl explained, while the older sister kicked her in the shins as punishment for her frankness.

"Have you no relatives?" I asked.

"Oh, yes, we have," all three again answered.

"Who are they?"

"Louis Goldman, Uncle Louis," she explained.

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"What is your uncle?"

"A shoemaker."

"And who else?"

"Uncle Marcus."

"And what is he?"

"A bum," the little boy put in. "A bum, that's what he is." I had a hard time to get him out of his sister's hands. They were still trying to kick him when the mother came in.

Mrs. D. remained at the door in surprise, evidently wondering who I was.

"What do you want?" she questioned.

I was taken by surprise, but I immediately remembered the children's talk about a cousin from the old country and I said that I was an agent from Ellis Island.

"Why!" the woman cried out, in ecstasy, "is he here? Oh! children your cousin is here!" And she kissed them all in an outburst of happiness. "Is he here? Tell me."

"Who is he?" I asked.

"Oh, I'll go immediately and take him out. It's my cousin, Leb Herman Rosen, my own cousin."

"All right," I said. "You'll have to give me some information first."

"What information? It's my real cousin."

She sat down ready to answer my questions. I took out my note book and put the following questions: [Pg 43]

"How long are you in America?"

"Eight years."

"How many children have you?"

"Three."

"How long is it since your husband died?"

"Four years."

"Now, if you want to take your cousin in your house you must prove that you'll be able to support him until he gets work, and show enough money to assure the United States that he will not become a public charge. How do you make a living? How much are you earning a week?"

"I—I—I," she stammered, "I make a living."

"How?" I insisted.

"I sell whisky, tea, coffee, powder, toothpaste."

"Well, how much do you make a week?"

"Well, well, I make a living."

"But to keep a cousin you must make more than a living—more than you need."

"I make more," she said. "I—do make more."

As I knew that she was receiving charity I did not believe her and told her she would have to prove that she made more than she needed. She walked up to a chiffonier, searched a drawer, and to my great astonishment brought forth a bank book which showed that she had one hundred and thirty-five dollars accumulated in the last two years. [Pg 44]

"Will that prove that I earn more than I spend?" she said triumphantly.

I looked at her in astonishment. A mother who lets her children starve to put money in the bank! What wild animal would neglect its offspring to such an extent! I called her into the next room and told her what I thought of her and who I was. She cried bitterly under my lashing, and then told me the following story:

"I should not tell you this, but as you think that I am an unnatural mother I must explain myself. My husband died four years ago. He was a cloak operator and earned good money when I married him. After the second child was born his wages did not suffice to keep us as well as he wished. It was a very busy season. He worked overtime every night, until one and two o'clock in the morning. When the season ended we had three hundred dollars in the bank. But soon he got sick. Six months he lay sick at home. When all the money was gone we had to send him to the hospital. A month later he died, and two months after his death I gave birth to the third child. While I lay in bed there was nobody to take care of the children and there was no bread for them either. A neighbour wrote to the charities and told them all about us, and our plight. Two days passed. A woman came, looked around, questioned me and went away. They sent a nurse and money to feed the children. When I was out of bed they called me to the office and informed me that they had decided to give me two dollars a week and pay my rent. But, I ask you, could I live on two dollars a week? I had to do something. I went out washing and scrubbing floors. I got sick. The charities got to know that I worked. They immediately informed me that if I worked they would not give me anything. What could I do? Live on the two dollars? That was an impossibility. Work? I did not earn enough to get along without their support. Little by little I began to sell tea and coffee in the hours when the children were in school. But the investigator was informed by the grocer and butcher that I spent more than two dollars a week. Again I was called to the office. They questioned me, tortured me, accused me of being a bad woman. Where did I get the money? In despair I lied to them. Told them that the grocer and butcher had given wrong information, that they did not know; they had no proof and had to give me the pension. [Pg 45]

"Still I could not get along on their money. My children were hungry. I was hungry. I went out again and sold tea and coffee and whisky, and under my coat I would bring an additional piece of meat and bread. Soon the neighbours knew that we had meat every day and some of them told the investigator. By this time she had made it a habit to spy on my every move. She reported me to the office. Again I was called and questioned and again I lied and cried. I could not get along [Pg 46]

on their two dollars a week and could not get along on my work alone. But when I got home I was wiser, and since then, instead of buying bread and meat, I have to put the money in the bank. This one hundred and thirty-five dollars is the meat and bread of my children, their health and their life. Yes, I am a bad mother. I am a bad mother," and wept anew.

The next day I went to the office and gave a report of my work. The case of Miriam D. I reported more extensively than the others, insisting that the children were starved while the woman had one hundred and thirty-five dollars in the bank, accumulated not from surplus but from what she was forced to deprive her children of. Mr. Lawson immediately called in the Manager and showed him my report. They congratulated me on my ability and I felt that they would tell their investigators that they must not persecute the woman and the orphans by spying. The Manager pronounced me a second Sherlock Holmes and announced that Mrs. D.'s pension would be cut off.

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I was dumbfounded. So this was the result of my work! To take the bread out of the mouths of the three orphans. I accused myself of stupidity and could look no one straight in the face. Through treachery I learned the truth, and instead of using it for her good I had used it to help the investigators be more cruel, more questioning than before. What could the woman do? Had she not told me that she could not live on what she earned? Was the one hundred and thirty-five dollars enough for her to support her children? And I imagined them all starved and sick, dying in hospitals. All through my fault. I should have known that they would not reform their investigating system because of my report. How I hated myself. How I hated the whole world. At night when I went home I was ashamed to kiss my children, for I had committed a crime. As I thought of the inscriptions on the doors: "For the poor of the land shall never cease;" "Let thy hand give freely to the needy," etc., I remembered Dante's "Lasciate ogni speranza voi ch' entrate."

In disgust and despair I walked the streets the next day without being able to do anything. Like a criminal who returns to the scene of his crime I walked around the house. I felt a strong call to go in and beg forgiveness for her undoing. I have since learned that it has not done any harm. On the contrary, deserted by the charities the woman redoubled her energies. The cousin she was waiting for arrived a few days later, bringing some money with him. They bought a grocery store and she is earning her living. But at that moment I thought myself guilty of the greatest crime. I made many decisions, but stuck to the last, namely, to take notes of all the evil that organised charity was doing and at the first opportunity give them out for the benefit of the world.

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I understood that the welfare of the poor did not concern the men at the head of the charity organisation; that it has become a business for them. A business they were managing, just as others manage factories. Their concern was to reduce the cost, to economise, just as the manufacturers try to produce the greatest amount of product with the smallest amount of outlay. And if hunger, starvation, sickness was the by-product, well, so much the worse for the poor.

WATCH THEIR MAIL

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One morning I received the following order:

"Investigate Sokol, Monroe Street, No. ——. Night visit preferable."

When I asked the Manager what he meant by night visit he told me between ten and eleven o'clock. Accordingly, at ten P. M. I knocked at the door of the above named family. In the few minutes that elapsed between the knocking and the opening of the door I heard a man groaning—as men groan under excruciating pain.

The woman, Mrs. Sokol, opened the door for me, and inquired who I was. I was instructed by the office not to tell them my identity under any circumstances. So I said I was from the Board of Health—that neighbours had claimed that they could not sleep on account of the man's groans, and I told Mrs. Sokol that we would have to see him and send him to a hospital. I entered the apartment. There were two rooms. In one room was the bed with the sick man in it. The other room was the kitchen, dining and reception room. A cold stove, a table, four chairs, and on one side two more folding beds. This was the furniture.

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The man kept groaning. His wife whispered to him to keep still, but his pains were probably so great that he could not understand what she said. I lit the gas and approached the bed. A strong odour of putrefaction compelled me to withdraw, and the next moment the wife told me that he had a cancer, that he had been operated upon several times without success and that he now suffered the most excruciating pains; that the doctor came only once in two days, only to have a look—"to see if he is already dead," as she put it.

"Why don't you send him to the Skin and Cancer Hospital?" I asked.

"We are only two years in this country," was the woman's reply, "and they will send us back to Russia."

"And the Jewish hospital?" I suggested.

"He has been there twice—they operated on him."

"Well, well," I urged, "why does he not stay there?"

The man groaned, the woman cried, some sick child in the neighbourhood woke with the noise and mixed his sickly crying with theirs and the moaning of the wind outside. It was a pitiful scene. I started my interrogation.

The man was a musician, a fiddler. He was not a member of the Union. He had been in America two years, and sick from the first moment he had come. "And how do you get along?" I asked. "From where do you get money for bread?" Again the woman cried. Soon the man fell asleep. I heard his heavy breathing and felt the odour of putrefaction emanating from his body. Pitilessly I insisted on getting an answer to my question: "From what do you live?"

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"There was not a piece of bread in the house to-day," was the answer.

"Yes, but where did you get yesterday's bread?"

"We had no coals for the last four days."

"But from where did you get it before that?" I argued.

"From—from—from the charity," the woman broke down hysterically.

The two folding beds in the kitchen attracted my attention and I asked her whether she had any boarders. This was the touchstone of her suffering. We drew our chairs away as far as possible from the sick bed and there she told me.

"These are not boarders' beds. They are the beds of my two daughters, Amy eighteen years old and Leah twenty—two daughters have I, like two flowers. Envied by the whole world. I was the proudest mother. Well, I'll tell you the whole story.

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"Two years ago we, my husband, myself and the two daughters, arrived here from Warsaw. My husband was a healthy, strong man. My daughters were dressmakers. We had a little money. We rented these same two rooms and a few days afterward, through the influence of friends, both children found work at their trade. Only my husband remained idle. They did not want to take him into the Union. A few weeks he walked around without work, then he went to a leather finding factory where he had to cut out pieces of leather. It was piecework. They worked in a cellar, sixteen or eighteen hours a day. At the end of the week he had two dollars. It was very hard on him. He had never done physical work, still he returned there the next week, hoping that he would do better, having a week's experience. He went away at five in the morning and returned at eleven at night, yet he could not make more than forty cents a day.

"His daughters made the first week six dollars each, working nine hours a day, and he, the father, working twice as hard and twice as many hours made two dollars a week. He took sick. We called the doctor. He gave a potion and left. My husband got worse and worse every day. We went to a hospital. There it was found that he had cancer, and must be operated on. But just as we were ready to go and do it we found out that there is a law that we had no right to use a public hospital before we have been here five years. We applied to the Jewish hospital. My husband was operated upon.

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"My daughters worked. On account of the illness of their father they had no opportunity to buy clothes, American clothes. They were still in their greenhorn dresses, and the whole shop made fun of them. They simply had to buy clothes. The money we brought here was long since gone, so when their father was brought home after the first operation there wasn't a penny in the house. The visiting doctor gave me a letter to the charities and told me that they would help me. I went there. I don't want to tell you through what I went at their hands. Enough to say that when I came home I felt as though I had committed the greatest sin. I felt guilty towards myself. I felt like a criminal awaiting his day of judgment.

"Finally the investigator, a young lady, came. She saw my daughters. They were neatly dressed, and as young girls generally are, they thought of their own life, were gay and healthy. The investigator started to examine them and after every answer she tried to confuse them and prove that they lied. She stayed a half hour. When she left the poor children were as pale as death—a terrible gloom had settled upon them—as though death itself had visited our shelter.

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"From then on we had no repose. They helped us with a few dollars, but every other day some one else inquired about us—at the neighbours—at the grocer—butcher. They visited us at all hours of the day and night. Sometimes when we had visitors the investigator would question them, until all our friends have left us. They followed the poor children to their work and went to take information from the employer. On one occasion, when the girls struck together with the other workers of the shop the boss cried out to my girls: 'I'll show you! When the charity will come I'll give such information that you wouldn't get a cent.' This was too much for the poor children. They came home, packed their belongings—and—" Here the poor woman broke out in hysterical weeping, approaching the two empty beds, and cried: "My house is empty. Cursed be the hour when I applied to charity. I should have gone out begging in the street."

And as I slipped out of the house the cry of the woman pursued me.

"Cursed—Cursed be the hour that I applied to charity!"

I reported the next day the situation of the family and urged immediate relief. The Manager called me into his sanctum and told me that my information was not complete, since I had not learned where the daughters were. "I am sure," he said, "that she knows where they are. You must get it out of her."

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"All right," I said, "but in the meantime send them relief. There is no coal, no bread."

"Are you sure?" he asked. I assured him of the fact.

"Then it's all right," and he rubbed his hands with great satisfaction. "It's all right," he repeated. "We'll break her stubbornness, all right. We'll get their address now. So they have no bread, eh?"

Cries from the waiting room came to my ears, as though a chorus of those unfortunate beings would blaspheme all together: "Cursed be the hour when we applied to charity—cursed—cursed—cursed."

We were interrupted by some one else coming in on some business.

I felt my head swimming and I looked longingly outside through the large window over the Manager's desk. A little bird flew around the sill, and hungry, she tried to pick the putty from around the pane. Mr. Rogers probably followed my wandering gaze for he was soon standing near me and having also remarked the little bird he exclaimed: "Poor little thing, is it not pitiful? Hungry and cold!" So saying he opened the window and invited the bird to enter. Yet the bird preferred to remain outside.

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Mr. Lawson was called in and a conference took place as to how to force Mrs. Sokol to give the address of her children.

"But do you suppose that she has sold her children for immoral purposes that you are so anxious to learn their whereabouts?"

"No, we don't suppose *that*," Mr. Rogers answered, "but when we give them money we want to know everything, you understand, everything. Here she has two daughters and she keeps their address a secret! Whatever we have done was of no avail. We must curb her. Isn't that so, Mr. Lawson? We must show her that she cannot keep secrets from us. What would you suggest, Mr. Baer?"

I had nothing to say.

Mr. Lawson twisted his little blond moustache awhile, then he suddenly exclaimed joyfully, as Archimedes cried, "Eureka" when he discovered the law of specific gravity: "Watch their mail!"

"They certainly get mail from the girls. Let Mr. Baer watch their mail and get one of their letters, and that will solve the whole thing."

The manager pronounced it a splendid idea and I was instructed accordingly. I went up to see Mr. Sokol a few times and reported that they got no mail. One morning, while visiting them, I found that the man had died over night. Among the mourners were two beautiful, pale girls. The daughters of the old couple.

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I reported the occurrence at the office. Mr. Lawson called me to his room.

"So he died? He died?" he repeated. "We will send her to the old people's asylum. That will save rent. But you saw the girls, did you?"

"Yes."

"What's their address? Did you find out?"

"I could not ask their address in such a moment," I retorted.

"It's a mistake, an awful mistake, Mr. Baer," he censured me. "It was the best occasion. You should have taken advantage of the moment. Please return to the house and get their address," he instructed, as he led me to the door.

From the hall I ran out into the street. I wanted fresh air—air and space. And this same Mr. Lawson almost cried when his wife's pet dog died. And Mr. Rogers pitied the poor little bird that picked the putty off the sill. And at charity conventions, when he had to appeal for funds, he almost shed tears about "our unfortunate brothers and sisters." Now they advise, when the father lay dead on the floor: "It was the best occasion. You should have taken advantage of the moment." Would a criminal be treated in this way during the third degree?

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The woman died a month after, in a hospital. Hunger and privation of all sorts had undermined her strength. *Charity had killed them both.*

THE ROLLER SKATES

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"Investigate Mrs. B., 124th Street, No. —. Investigator reports woman never home. Questions morality. Urgent. W. L."

I found this slip on my desk one fine morning. An hour after I was at the given address. The door was locked. No one was at home. Inquiry at the neighbours informed me that I would have to wait until three o'clock when the children came from school.

"And Mrs. B.? When does she come?" I asked.

"When the children come from school," I was answered.

Consequently I had to remain in the neighbourhood. New York's climate is very fit for a cosmopolitan city. Just as the men of the South dwell in the neighbourhood of the Northern, the Italian near the Norwegian and the Spaniard in the same building with the Russian, so does the winter live near the summer, the spring next to the autumn. One day a snowstorm, the next day it rains. You put on the heaviest clothes one morning and come home with your waistcoat on your arm, so to speak. Here in the middle of winter, the second half of January, I had gone out with a heavy winter coat and at one o'clock it looked more like the end of May than winter. I walked up to Central Park to spend my time until 3 P. M. The squirrels had left their hiding places and were dancing to and fro to replenish their reserve store of food. The little birds flew and sang merrily. The children of the well to do, watched by the ever-following servants, played with the caged prairie dogs, the goats and other animals of the Park Zoo. Around the monkey cage the people of the suburbs and more distant towns and villages were watching and enjoying the antics of our gay ancestors. The lions roared, the tiger groaned, and that money-saving elephant rang the bell every time some one put a cent in his big snout. This was the only thing he had learned from men—save money. I don't know why, but one forgets himself so easily in the neighbourhood of children, farmers and wild animals. I had not noticed how time passed and stood in the Zoo more than the required time. I had completely forgotten my mission. But some one inquired the time from the keeper. I heard his answer and ran.

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In 124th Street again.

The children are out of school. The street has taken on life. Girls are jumping the rope and the boys have taken out their skates and glide gracefully up and down the sidewalk. Their faces are red, their eyes are brilliant and their arms swing to and fro to keep their balance. In an empty lot a group of Jewish boys fight it out with some Irish youngsters. On another lot another group of Irish and Jewish boys play base-ball.

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I ring the bell of Mrs. B.'s home. No answer. I inquire of the neighbour. "Are the B.'s home?"

"The children are back from school and are probably out in the street, the little loafers." She closed up. I would like to speak with her further, so I knock at the door.

"Excuse me for inconveniencing you, madam, but could you tell me when Mrs. B. will be home—whether she is at home in the morning?"

"I could not tell you, sir."

"Does she go out to work?"

"I don't know—I don't care. Ask some one else. Every day another bother about the poor woman. I am tired of answering. The charity again?"

"No, no," I assured her. "I have some other business with her. I am an old friend from the time her husband was yet alive."

"She'll soon be in. She is probably talking with a neighbour. Wait; I'll go and ask the boy. He must be near the house."

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Presently she put a shawl over her shoulders, gave a last look to the boiling pots, covered one, took another off, and was soon with me in the street. She looked to the right and left, asked the grocer and butcher, and finished by calling down the street: "Mike! Mike! Where are you, loafer?" She soon distinguished him among the other boys and pointed him out to me. He was standing with his back to us watching the other boys as they glided on their skates.

"Mike, Mike!" the woman called, but the boy was too engrossed to hear her. Together we walked up to him. "That gentleman wants to see your mother, you loafer," the woman introduced him, and went her way. A boy of twelve years old, who looked like one of eight by his physique, and like an old man by his wrinkled and worn-out look. Pale, stooping, with a little nervous twitch around the lips and a short tearing cough as he spoke. This told the tale of his misery.

"What do you want?" he asked me angrily.

"Come into the house," I answered, and putting a hand on his shoulder I signed him to follow me.

"I want to stay here," the boy said, and with a jerk he freed himself from my hand. "I want to watch the boys play—run on the skates," and he turned away to watch one particularly able boy as he made fancy figures with his feet.

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"Where are your skates, Mike?" I questioned.

"I have none. What's it your business?"

From the empty lot flew a ball. Mike caught it and was about to throw it back when one of the boys called out:

"Hi, Hi, Mike—charity kid—hurry up. Throw the ball here. Hurry up."

Angry, Mike threw the ball in the opposite direction and flashed back a short sentence that gave his opinion about his insulter. A fist fight was the result and the poor lad would have gotten the worst of it had not his mother suddenly appeared from behind, and hitting the aggressor and the child she separated them and took her son home. He wriggled as though he wanted to go back to fight, but his mother had him well in hand. I followed them. At the entrance of the hall I waited a few minutes before knocking at the door, listening. The mother scolded, the boy cried and a little girl's voice pacified.

"Come in."

"Mrs. B.?" I inquired.

"Yes, sir," the woman answered, and as she spoke she removed her coat and rubbers.

About thirty, care-ploughed face, weak eyes, colourless lips, stooped, narrow, short of breath.

"What is it you want, sir?"

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"Could we go into another room or would you send the children out so we can talk at our ease, Mrs. B.?"

The woman thought for awhile, then she beckoned to the children, who went into another room. I came straight to the point. I claimed that I was from the Gerry Society and that the children were not well taken care of.

"Where are you the whole day? You leave the children on the street, their shoes are torn, their clothes not suitable to the season—they are hungry, dirty."

The woman cried, whined. She was a poor widow. Charities gave her too little and all the rest of the story that I expected.

"But where are you the whole day long and late at night?" I insisted.

She gave a thousand explanations, none of which were true. The last one was that she went to neighbours in order to save coal. At this point the boy came out from the other room. He looked determined, and he had a little book folded in his hand.

"Mamma lies. She goes out for business. She sells laces and curtains."

"Shut up—shut up!" She sprang from her chair. I interfered. "Let the boy alone."

"Mamma lies," the boy continued, and showed me the bank book. I opened it and saw that the balance was almost five hundred dollars.

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"What is this?" I asked. "Five hundred dollars in the bank and your children hungry and naked?"

The woman looked like a criminal before the bar. The boy explained.

"It's not her fault, Mister. It's the fault of the ladies from the charities. They come here and bother every day. She can't buy anything, not even meat every day. She has to put the money in the bank. She has promised that when we move out she will buy me a pair of skates like all the other boys and girls have. Now she has enough money. Let her move away from here to a place where nobody knows us. I don't want to be called 'charity kid' any longer. I want roller skates. I want to move, I want new pants, I want meat every day. I don't want to be called charity kid any longer, and that's all."

The mother looked at her son and cried. The little girl hid in a corner. The boy had finished. His nerves gave out and he too cried. A few moments I looked at them and thought again of the poor wretches who are in the clutches of organised charity, the mother that starved her children because she dared not buy meat, because she dared not dress them. In four years she had saved five hundred dollars. Just the price of meat for every day of the year. A little more bread and fruit. She certainly had saved with an object in view. To save herself. And all the time the children knew that she had the price of food. The boy, longing for childish pleasures, roller skates, which the mother dared not buy because of the investigator's "Where did you get the money?" The bad neighbour, for whom the poor woman may not have wanted to wash the floor, would call in the "Lady" and tell her: "They have meat every day. The children have pennies, and now they have skates too." And the "Lady" would question, torture, menace, call names, insult. Ah! I knew the whole game now. Knew it only too well. That little room at the top of which is the sign "Investigator." I knew how they went in there. Knew how they came out. No, it was not her fault.

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"Here, Mrs. B.—your bank book. I am not from the Gerry Society. I am from the charities."

The woman trembled. The boy looked at me.

"When does your month finish here?"

"On the first."

"Move away from here, woman, move away. It's your last chance to save yourself. Move away and earn your living. You will not get a cent from the charities, and that boy must not be touched. You

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are to let him alone or I will take him away from you. Good-night."

I ran out. At home a party of friends awaited me. We were to go and hear music. I could not. I wanted to drink. I stayed at home and drank brandy until I fell asleep. I drank and swore until I slept.

The next morning when I had to make out my report I excused myself, saying that I had to continue my investigation as I had more information to gather. In reality it was to give me time to think out what to say and what not to say. The next day I made out a report, simply saying that I had found out the woman Mrs. B. had five hundred dollars in the German Bank, Book No. 8..., that she does business in curtains; and advised them to cut her off immediately. The Manager did not believe what I said and consequently 'phoned to the bank, which corroborated my statement. Immediately the investigators were called in, and in firm tones the Manager lectured them on their tender-heartedness with applicants. He told them that they must make their investigations in a more thorough manner, otherwise they would lose their positions. Stupid fool that I was. Whenever I wanted to do good I only made the poor suffer more.

Promptly on the first of the next month I was in 124th Street. Mrs. B. had moved a few days before. Through the Express Company I got her address, way up in the Bronx. I went there, on Washington Avenue. I saw the boy and girl in new clothes and on roller skates. [Pg 68]

"Hullo," I greeted them. They both became pale.

"Where do you live now, children?"

The boy thought a moment and then he hissed out between his teeth: "What in hell is it your business, now? We don't get any more money from you. What do you come to bother us here for? We don't want you. We have got enough of your dirty business."

"Listen," I told him: "I don't want to bother you any more, but tell me, have you bread and meat every day now?"

"Meat and candies and butter and everything, and mamma has a million in the bank and that's all, and don't come to bother us. We are no more 'charity kids.' For God's sake can't you leave us alone?"

"Good luck to you." I turned around and disappeared as quickly as possible.

THE TEST

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In the boiler factories they submit the boiler to a test of resistance. The engine is subjected to a pressure three or four times stronger than the one it will have to withstand in the ordinary run of work. If successful it is sent out to the market guaranteed by the factory. If not, it is made over. The weak points are strengthened, and in most cases it is put away to be entirely recast.

For boilers and engines this may be a good system of control, though many an engineer maintains that the over-pressure weakens the machine for ordinary use.

To use such a system with men, women and children is barbarous, to say the least. The Inquisition had such a system—the Question Chamber. It is a well-known fact that persons put to the "Question" often admitted things which in reality they had never said or done. Most of the time they, the tortured ones, knew that to admit these things meant death, the hangman or the auto da fé. Still, when they confessed, the torture ceased for the moment. This they called "The Test." Not one in a thousand could maintain his will power when the test was applied. It went on in crescendo as the hours passed by and the man or woman did not "respond." It was up to the man doing the work to devise such means as would loosen the tongue, break the will. The hangman himself was punished for not getting at the truth, or was praised by his superior for his success. Torquemada called a particular man from Madrid to accompany him to Grenada, as he alone knew how to apply the "Test" to the glory of the Almighty and of Jesus Christ. This man had perfected himself in the art of torturing. I am not certain whether this is the man who is spoken of in connection with the "Question" of a certain gentleman which had to be put off because the "real one" at the bench had a terrible toothache that day. [Pg 70]

But the "Test" is applied to-day. Applied to the poor by organised charity. Applied systematically, methodically and in crescendo; and like the "real one" wanted by Torquemada there are real ones in the offices of the Charity Institutions.

This is how it is done.

A family is pensioned by the organisation. Three or four years the family has received regularly two dollars a week and the rent and coals for the winter. Then all at once, generally early in the winter, the order to apply the "Test" is given. The family is visited three or four times in a week. The children are followed to and from their work. The neighbours are adroitly asked about the family. Every one visiting the family and surprised by the investigator is questioned: "Are you the brother of Mrs. B.?" "Are you her husband? Are you her boarder?" If this does not bring results [Pg 71]

the coal is cut off, to see whether the family cannot succeed in raising money for coal. If this is not successful the allowance is discontinued for a few weeks. This naturally brings the woman to the office. She is not allowed to see the Manager. For several days this is continued, then the question is put: What is she doing at night? Where does she go during the day? Whence does she get the necessary additional money? If she is a stubborn subject and resists all this, then the rent is cut off. The landlord waits a few days. The woman runs to the office. "What shall I do?" "We have no money; help yourself," she is told. In a few days the "furniture," two broken chairs, a limping table and a mattress, are put out in the street. In the cold, in the snow, the children are huddled up in rags, between the table and the stove and the picture of Washington. On top of the bundle of bedding is a saucer in which some passersby have thrown a few cents. Sometimes, in a case like this, some distant, poor relative, or some one with whom the family had connections, steps in and gives them a helping hand. Then, the test being successful, the woman is cut off the pension list. She has helped herself.

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At other times, there being no one to help, the applicant makes such a row that he is restored to the list with a cross after his name denoting bad behaviour. On another occasion he will again be tried.

Sometimes the woman comes running and begs that her rent be paid. She will attend to the rest. She will sell newspapers, matches. She will scrub floors. She will send her twelve year old daughter to work.

"You can't do that. She is not of age."

"Yes, she is."

"According to our records she is only twelve years old."

"I lied, then. She is fourteen. Only pay my rent. I can't stay in the street."

The "Test" has been partially successful. Pension and coal supply is cut off. Only the rent is paid. A little girl is sent to an early grave.

I remember one case where the coalman, an old Italian, had pity and gave the coal on credit. When the investigator asked him why he did so he answered angrily, "Not your business." A report was made in regard to the immoral relations between the poor widow and the old Italian. It was but natural that a certain friendship should be established between the widow and her benefactor. She repaired his clothes, and when the allowance was cut off he divided his bread with her. No amount of explanation could convince the investigator that the woman was not proven to be immoral by this fact.

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"Why is she so friendly with the coalman?"

"Because she is cold and he gives her coals."

"Why does he give her coals?"

"Because you don't send her any."

Then the investigator would answer triumphantly:

"If she were an honest woman she would stand the test. She would suffer cold and hunger." Then she would remember that last summer the woman had a new dress that she could not account for and once there was a piece of chicken in her pot. She evidently got it from the butcher for her good offices. The poor have no business to eat chicken. It is the old question of the Southern negro. He is not allowed to engage in other trades than cooking and shoe shining, and when you discuss this with a Southern gentleman he proves to you that the negro is an inferior being from the fact that he does not work at anything but these trades. You cut off the supply of coal in the dead of winter, and when the woman obtains it from the coalman it is a proof that she is dishonest—that they are "all alike." It is true that many of them would give their bodies for a bucket of coal or a piece of meat when they are hungry and cold. Many of them have admitted crimes that they have never committed under stress. But what does that prove?

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One young widow with a two year old child when submitted to the test twice in one year was taken in by a "Madame" of a house of ill-fame in the neighbourhood. She left the few broken chairs and the table on the sidewalk and went there in the capacity of cook. I found her there. She was glad of the change. "But it is an immoral house," I argued. "It's better than to be at the mercy of the investigator and the office," was her answer. A few weeks later she had given away her child and was a regular inmate of the house, and still glad of the change, and thankful to the woman who had taken her in. But the report of the investigator, both to the charity institution and the Sisterhood, reads: "Mrs. K. always led a life of shame and all my work was unsuccessful. When put to the test she went to a disreputable house and has of late abandoned her own child." The Sisterhood used their influence and had the house raided a few times and all the women arrested, Mrs. K. among them. The "madame" was expressly told that she was being persecuted on account of the woman she had taken in. When Mrs. K. had finished her sentence in prison she found the door of the house closed to her. Fourteenth Street is free. I spoke to her. She is still glad of the change. Such are the results of the "Test."

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It is not those who do not receive charity—the poor who have to go without—who are to be pitied, but those who are in the clutches of charity. They should be helped, saved. They are the greatest

sufferers. Under the cloak of charity men and women are tortured. Each piece of bread is scalded with tears and pains, and if another Napoleon should arise there is a job waiting for him—to burn down the modern Inquisition, destroy the torture chamber, abolish the "Question," the "Test," to save the poor from organised charity.

No wonder that the situation is such a horrible one, when you consider the general mentality of the people supposed to work for the amelioration of the suffering poor. Who are they? Have they the interest of the poor at heart, or do they consider first their own job? Does any one of them start his daily work with a thought of the poor, with a charitable thought? Not at all. His only occupation is how to please his superior, how to show a good record, so that his own bread is assured. The poor are stepping stones, a climbing ladder towards promotion, social influence, recognition. Incidentally some of the applicants get a few dollars a week, but they are not the real objective point.

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It reminds me of Colonel Sellers in Mark Twain's story. He proposes a partnership to a young man for the manufacture of a certain eye-water, a special preparation to heal sore eyes, and when the young man becomes enthusiastic about it—he will heal sores!—Colonel Sellers tells him: "This is not the object, my boy. From the first fifty thousand bottles we sell we open another branch in Calcutta or Bombay—there are millions of sufferers there." Again the young man thinks of the good work, but Colonel Sellers continues: "And from there we establish warehouses in Alexandria, Smyrna and Buenos Ayres, twenty million bottles a year is our output, with a net profit of two hundred thousand dollars a year." By this time the young man too has been influenced to look away from the real object, the sick, the sufferers. Two hundred thousand dollars a year is a good prize. But Twain had something in his sleeve and Colonel Sellers delivers his last blow.

"Do you think that a man like me would be satisfied with a paltry two hundred thousand dollars a year? There's millions in it, my dear boy." The real business now only begins. "We will form a stock company with a capital of twenty-five million dollars, etc., etc."

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This was the real business. The sick and poor and the medicine were only an incident, a necessary ingredient to the whole scheme to give it an appearance of something. There are enough Colonel Sellers in the charity institutions. They are there only for a fraction of time before they get the real thing—before they form the stock company. Incidentally the sore eye preparation, namely, the poor, play a rôle.

The charity institution—it is the Stock Exchange of suffering.

I have just described one form of the "Test." When I once spoke about it to some one who has been connected with another one of these institutions for years, expecting him to be horrified, he simply took a note of the details in his book. "And how does it work?" he asked me. I explained that a good many, driven to the brink, have squirmed out by some by-path, while others shift for themselves as best they can.

"Well, well," he thought aloud, "I'll have to try it myself." And incidentally I learned a good many other tricks of the trade, as he called them, from him.

"There was one particular woman," he told me, "whose mouth I had to open with my fist so that she would tell us where her boy was. He had run away from the place we had found for him. We wanted him to learn a trade and a glassblower gave him a chance. But the boy would not stay with his boss. I argued and argued and argued. He did not like the trade, he told me, but in reality it was work he did not like. The last time he ran away I decided that it was about time to show my authority and I found a reason to have him arrested. The mother having told me that he had not given her his pay I wanted her to get a warrant issued and put him away for a few months in a house of correction, just to teach him a good lesson, but the mother would not tell me where he was. When I saw that I could not make her say anything by persuasion—well, I had to use force."

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"What of the boy?" I inquired.

"He was no good. He was six months in the house of correction, but it did not help. He is now a gang leader of very bad reputation," he finished, with devout eyes. This stupid ass in charge of the poor, *who walks six miles to get a certain brand of cigar, would not understand that a boy may not like one trade and be very willing to learn another.* This spiritual hog wanted to show his authority by compelling a mother to give up her child to gaolers—used force to do it—to the Glory of the Almighty and Jesus Christ. And he wondered that his "case" had become a gang leader! I wonder that the boy did not repay him for his splendid service to humanity.

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SCABS

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In C— in 1910 thousands of workers in the clothing industry struck for better wages. They

were mostly newly-arrived immigrants, all of them skilled workmen, and though the manufacturers were making millions and advertised that they employed only the best skilled labour, the workers, men and women, and their families, starved.

A shameful system of task work was established, whereby contractors sublet their work to sub-contractors, and these to other contractors, and the workers were kept at piece work. Many of them worked from six A. M. until midnight, in dirty, dingy sweatshops and at the end of the week they received seven or eight dollars. Even this small sum was not assured. It happened more than once that the sub-contractor, for whom the men worked, simply disappeared with the pay of all the men. As they were not engaged by the firm they could not ask the manufacturer to pay them, and had to go hungry, they, their wives and their children.

Such conditions lasted a good many years, until at last, in 1910, the men organised and struck to abolish the sub-contracting system and the piece work which led to it. The men struck for a minimum wage, a fixed working hour and sanitary factory conditions. They also wanted to know for whom they were working. To obtain such necessary and elementary rights they were compelled to stay out several months, entailing great suffering from hunger and cold.

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In every strike the manufacturers use strike-breakers. Sometimes, in America, the students of the colleges go to scab, to protect the right of *free labour*, they claim. In the clothing industry skilled workers are used. The students could not execute the work, and among the skilled tailors there was not one mean enough to scab.

Each charity institution also keeps an employment bureau. The men and women they send to work are always paid the most wretched wages, and they work to the last notch of their endurance. For work that has hitherto been paid twelve dollars per week the man who comes recommended by the charities receives not more than six dollars. Of him twice as much work is expected. He is not supposed to lift his head or speak or smile. He must always look humble, wretched, submissive. He must make it appear that his work is worth much less than he gets. He must look to his employer as to the Saviour, because he has been sent by the charities. The fact that he appealed to the charities is a proof that he is a failure, also a proof that the man has nothing to depend upon; no brother, sister or friend that could help. The employers demanding help from the employment office are all "subscribers"—they contribute a certain sum to the institution. For this and other services rendered, they are given a little white plate with black letters to nail on the door, which reads: "Member of organised charity." This acts like a talisman. It drives away the hungry and needy.

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If you were to stay a half hour in the private sanctum of the manager of the bureau you would hear such telephonic conversation:

"Is this Mr. So and So?"

"How is our man getting on?"

"Well, if he does not suit you we'll send you another one."

"We have plenty of schnorrers (beggars) around here."

"That's how they all are—lazy. They want money, not work."

Five minutes later another man is sent. The employment office is not for the benefit of the poor, but to be of service to the rich, to lower the pride of the workingman. During the strike of the cloak makers the telephone of the bureau was continually ringing. The manufacturers demanded help. When any one applied for charity the first question put was: "Are you a tailor?" And they did not believe the man or woman who said "No." If they discovered a tailor there was rejoicing in the Institution and Mr. X. or Mr. Z., a clothing manufacturer, was called up and told the glad tidings. "We are sending you a man."

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Thus does organised charity work to break a strike of men who are demanding living wages; a strike where the poor suffer so that their children may live a decent life.

The records of the institution were looked up, and every man and woman who was thought to have had a connection with the needle at any time of his life, or who could operate a sewing machine, was singled out and the order to "cut off" was given. A few days later, men old and broken, sick and worn out women and consumptive girls, were thronging the halls of the institution. They cried and begged and showed handkerchiefs red with the blood of their wounded lungs. There they were with their swollen eyes and hands crippled from the toil of former years. But like the herd of cattle from the slaughter-house, serving only one purpose as far as the man with the long knife is concerned, so were they all, slowly but surely, driven upstairs to the employment office, from where they were escorted to the shops, to finish their days slaving at the machine to enrich the donors of the institution and help in the good work of starving into submission their brothers and sisters on strike for living wages.

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When I protested and asked why this was done they said:

"Is this institution kept up by the poor, by the workingman, or by the donations of the rich manufacturers?" And then again I asked:

"But *for whom* is it kept up?" to which I was answered by sneers and shrugs and laughter.

And the thousands of workers knew not from where these poor starved men came and they

fought against them and blood was spilled—blood that otherwise trickled slowly away on the handkerchiefs, on the waste, and was wiped off the mouth with the linen from which garments were manufactured.

When the strike was at an end and the victorious workmen returned to their places, the scabs were sent away. Again they were restored to the pension list or sent to the sanatorium, but in a few months, when the leaves began to fall from the trees, the list was reduced to half—men and women had gone to their graves.

But the charity institutions had their subscription list increased, for the rich had learned to know what a strong support they had in organised pity. Walk now through the clothing district of a city, and on each and every door you will see the white enamel sign, with black letters: "Members of the organised charities." It is written with blood—with the same red, bloody letters in which the sign of the house on the road is written:

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"Ye poor of the land come and warm your bodies."

Only, instead of the stove, there is a sewing machine, a pressing iron, a drilling machine, and the devil laughs and laughs and shows his white teeth.

"Has ever man built a better place for me!"

SAVING HIM

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In the waiting room I noticed a man who came a few days consecutively. Somehow he impressed me as outside the class of people that apply for charity. Though he had passed the basement ordeal and had to get through with the waiting room lesson there still was a look of independence in his eyes.

He never spoke to the other applicants; he never sat on the benches reserved for them. More than once the office boy and other employees had told him to sit down, in an imperative tone. At such an admonition he would retreat to a corner with a bitter smile on his lips and view the whole thing as a passing ordeal through which he had to go.

He impressed me with his indomitable look, with his high forehead and the deep serious lines carved on his face. He was also very much interested in the doings of the office and I often thought that he was trying to get the sense of this hustling and bustling around him.

One day he appeared to be very nervous. A look of desperate determination was in his eyes as he came in. Instead of going to the waiting room he sought to enter the sanctum sanctorum of the Manager and get an explanation of some sort from him. Repeatedly he inquired of the boys how he could reach that high person. With a shrug of the shoulders the boys passed him by without replying to his questions. Others admonished him to go to the waiting room.

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I approached him and asked him what he wanted.

"I want to see the Manager," he answered. "For the last five days I have been coming here. I have made an application eight days ago and have had no answer. Now," he said, "I have not applied to charity eight days before I needed it. It is my last resource. I can't find any work. I'm a tailor. During the season I have been sick, otherwise I would have saved up for slack times. My wife has borne me a child two weeks ago and my landlord threatens to put us out."

He used better English than the average workman and he was so dignified in his appeal, as if he considered that the charity owed him help when in distress. I told him that I would try to arrange that he see the Manager as soon as possible. I, so to speak, cleared the path for him. He was intercepted by Mr. Lawson, who in his cold voice asked him what he wanted. The man explained his situation. He did not cry; he did not whine. In simple words he said what he had to say. Mr. Lawson looked at him with his piercing grey eyes. He seemed very interested in the man. His dignity was so impressive, so manly. As he finished his tale Mr. Lawson put his hand on the man's shoulder and dismissed him with very kind words, saying that they would attend to it as soon as possible.

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The man went away thanking him. I saw Mr. Lawson searching on his desk and soon he had the man's application. He studied it in all its details. All of a sudden he said to me: "You saw this man? I'm going to save him. I am sure that everything he told is true, and I'm going to save him. Such men should be saved. They are of a better kind and we are going to save him from the degradation of the waiting room and association with the derelicts—our regular customers."

"How much are you going to give him?" I asked, and at this moment I thought very highly of Mr. Lawson. For such is human nature—excuse all bad acts for a single good one.

"How much are we going to give him?" the gentleman repeated in an astonished voice that had a tinge of sarcasm in it. "We are not going to give him *anything*. Such men must be saved from pauperism. If we should give him something he'd be lost. I want to save him; do you understand, *save him*. I will give orders not to let him in the hall at all the next time he comes."

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As I went out I had in my mind a new interpretation of Christ's crucifixion. Pontius Pilate wanted

"TOO GOOD TO THEM"

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One afternoon there was a great commotion in the office. As soon as I entered I felt that something extraordinary had happened.

"Did you hear the news?" one of the employees asked me. "Something awful has happened."

"What is it?" I inquired curiously, as I knew that only something very important could stir these hardened "charity workers."

"Why!" the young lady burst out, with horror in her voice. "Imagine! an applicant, a mean, dirty applicant, a pauper, an immoral woman probably, has slapped Mr. Cram's face."

"Did she? Really?" I exclaimed, and not being able to contain my joy I laughed for the first time since I had crossed the door of the institution. The lady wondered at my joy.

"What are you laughing for?" she asked. "Do you think it is fun to be hit and insulted by an applicant? Mr. Cram is there the whole day listening to their lies. He is one of the best men in the institution, and along comes a dirty derelict, a pauper, and slaps him in the face. Do you think it's fun? It shows how mean the poor are, how ungrateful, impolite, criminal. You should not laugh about such things, Mr. Baer," she admonished reproachfully.

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"But why did she do it?" I queried. "There must have been a reason. He must have provoked her badly. Cram insults them all, and who knows what terrible thing he said to this one!"

"No, no!" the young lady interrupted me, and her face took on an expression of contempt and every time she pronounced the word applicant, pauper, or any other characterisation of the poor who apply to charity, she hissed it out between closed teeth, as though it were disgusting and vile.

"No," she continued, "there is no reason strong enough to excuse her. To slap the face of the one to whom you stretch a begging hand. Why, that's the last rung of the ladder. It simply shows how unworthy they are of charity. The first requirement of an applicant is to be humble. I know whose fault it is," she insisted. "I know—" the last sentence conveyed the intimation that I should question her, and I did so.

"It's Mr. Cram's own fault," she said. "He is *too good to them*—that's the reason. I told him so," she finished, and sat down to her work.

Cram too good! Great God! If they call him *too good*, what about the others? What about they themselves? Have I not yet seen it all—is more horror to follow? All that I had witnessed in the basement presented itself before me. Cram with the pipe between his teeth, reading an application and putting his insolent questions, laughing in the applicant's face, calling them liars, lazy, immoral women, dirty, and all the rest of it.

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"What happened next?" I asked the young lady. She had evidently felt that I was not in sympathy with Cram's misfortune, for she answered very brusquely:

"He had her arrested," and did not want to talk further. In vain I tried to obtain details. Further than that she would not go.

I felt that Cram must have outdone himself to have provoked one of those crushed souls to such an action. To tell the truth I had great admiration for the woman who had done it. It gave me greater hope in the redemption of humanity. I wanted to know all the details but could not get them in the office. Cram himself was looked upon as a martyr. Once when passing me he said: "You remember what I told you the other day? They are a bad lot—and to think that I am a red hot Socialist. I hope this will cure you of your soft heart," he added, as he walked away.

It took me three days before I learned the woman's address. I decided to go and see her. One evening I walked up five flights of stairs of a dingy tenement house. I knocked at the door and was soon allowed to enter. As it was very cold the gas was frozen. The room where I sat, the kitchen, was lighted by a candle stuck in an empty bottle. There was no fire in the stove. I did not see the children, but heard their voices from the adjoining room. "Mamma, bread. Mamma, who's there?" the little ones queried. I told the woman frankly the object of my visit, without telling her that I was employed by the charities. I only said that I had learned through a friend what had happened and was interested to know all about it from her own words. The children were continually disturbing us with their questions and the rooms were so cold that I could hardly stand it. I advised making a fire. Of course there was no coal. I gave her some money to go down and buy some, also some bread and butter and sugar. We were friends in a few minutes and she did not feel very ill at ease. When I gave her the few cents I had not yet seen her face, on account of the semi-darkness. Only her voice was so well-modulated that a few words sufficed to indicate the personality of the woman. Two big, sparkling eyes shone out from under her brows. She told the children that she was going to buy bread and coal and they clapped their little hands in joy, and as she closed the door one of them asked: "Did the gentleman give you money? Is he from the charities?"

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"No," I answered, "I'm just a friend," and taking the candle I went into the adjoining room where they were in bed covered with all the pillows and clothes that the house afforded. There were two children. I gave them some chocolate that I had bought for my own children, and soon we became great friends.

"Have you any children?" the older child, about six years of age, asked me suddenly.

"Yes—I have."

"How many?"

"Three," I told him.

"Have they always had what to eat?" the younger one, about five years old, inquired.

"No," I said, in a voice choked with shame.

"No?" they both wondered, "and they have a papa. Mamma said all the children who have papas have what to eat!" said the older one. "Yes," philosophised the younger, "but he gives away to other children. He's a bad papa. Our papa was not a bad papa. He gave everything to his children. That's the kind of papa we had."

The mother soon returned with her purchases, the coalman behind her. Soon there was a fire in the stove. The tea kettle was set on the fire. The children were given bread, and the house became very friendly. As my eyes accustomed themselves to the darkness I remarked that the rooms were kept very clean and orderly. Everything had its place. Some little pictures on the walls were placed with taste. One would never have suspected the actual want of bread on seeing the house. The quietness of the children soon told me that they were sleeping. I waited until the tea was ready. I casually learned that she was a country-woman of mine, coming from Roumania and also from the same town. I even remembered some of her relatives who were known as wealthy, as wealth goes in that country. I lit another candle. The tea was ready. We sat opposite one another to drink the beverage. The fact that we were from the same country had given rise to a feeling of friendship between us. Instead of talking about herself she inquired about my family and remembered my mother, brothers and grandfather.

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I had almost forgotten the object of my visit, so busily were we engaged in questioning one another about relatives and acquaintances. All the misery she had suffered had not stamped out her dignity. Good breeding spoke from every line of her face, from every curve of her body. She must have been about thirty years old. She spoke of her poverty as of a misfortune that might happen to any one. She was not ashamed of it, as of a vice, as most of the poor are—as they are made to feel once they come under the influence of charity; and this made my mission a very easy one. As I write these lines her beautiful modulated voice still rings in my ears. Till late into the night we sat opposite each other. Everything that I had witnessed in the last few months passed before my mental vision. Every evil became accentuated, for I felt that the woman before me must have been shamefully insulted. A refined, even educated, woman of her temperament would not commit violence if she were decently treated. Without her story I knew that she was right, but the poison of mistrust had touched my heart also. I wanted to know, to question, to bruise, to delve into her heart. And with all the ability I had acquired as an investigator I brought her round to tell me her story; not merely how she came to hit Cram, but from the very beginning, since she married.

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At first she refused, but I used such arguments that she at last acquiesced. With one of her children, who could not sleep on account of a headache, in her arms, in the half dark room, she told me her story of woe, simply and with dignity, and if here and there was a note of pathos or a tear she restrained it and went on bravely to the end. And this was her story:

"Eight years ago, in Roumania, I married the man of my choice. He was a dentist. Soon after our marriage a terrible persecution against the Jews started. Jews were killed on the slightest pretext and their murderers were never brought to justice. The parents of the murdered, fearing vengeance, never tried to prosecute the criminals. It went so far that killing a Jew became a kind of sport. We quit that cursed land and came here. My husband, not knowing English, could not pass the State Board examination and worked clandestinely until he was trapped by the County Medical Association. He paid his fine and was let go free, but he was afraid to work, and to hire out to others in this line is so poorly paid that he could not even think of it. Soon the little money we had was gone and to earn our bread he went to work in a tailor's factory as presser. A child was born. Not accustomed to manual work, and angry at what he considered his degradation, he fell sick. When he got better he took to drink. Oh! those nights when he came home unable to stand on his feet and crying. I would talk to him the next day—cry—and threaten to leave him. He would promise to reform and the next pay day he would come home drunk again.

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"A second child was soon born. One day, at work, he spat blood. They brought him home. He went to bed and when the youngest child was six weeks old he died of consumption. This was five years ago. I was unable to do anything to earn my living. Some friends helped me out for a while but soon I was forgotten. On account of my small children I could not go out to work. I also knew no trade. A few months afterwards I applied to the charities for help. They wanted to take my children away to an orphanage. This I could not bear. They are my children—I cannot separate from them. Finally they agreed to pension me—two dollars and my rent. From such a small sum we could not live. I learned to do some work in the artificial flower business. I took work home, and in the season, working until midnight, I would average about three dollars a week. The

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investigator reported that I worked. One day she met me on the street. I had just put on a new dress I had bought. The next week my pension did not come. I went to the office and inquired.

"If you earn enough money to buy dresses you don't need charity," was their answer. I explained to them that my other dress was torn, that my new dress cost only two dollars, as I had made it myself, and offered to prove to them that I did not earn more than three dollars a week. My pension was resumed, but ever since the investigator has treated me very badly. She has forced me to move every two or three months. Here it was too dear, there too high, there too good, and so on. Last month she came to me at ten o'clock one night. As I was already in bed I did not let her in. She insisted and threatened that she would cut me off. This enraged me still further and I did not open the door for her. She stood in the hall more than half an hour, then she again knocked at the door, cursed and went away. The next week was rent week. I received no money, and the landlord, who knew that the charities pay my rent, came and told me that unless he received his cheque in two days he would put me out.

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"I went to the charities to ask why they did not send the money. I was directed to a little room, on the door of which is written: 'Investigator.' Mr. Cram came in, and seating himself before me began the most insolent questioning one could imagine. How much did I spend at the grocery? How much at the butcher? How much for dresses? Then he began to question me about my friends. I told him that no friends came to my house. 'So,' he said, with an insolent twinkle in his eyes, 'and who is the gentleman who was in your room the night you did not open the door to Miss —?' I felt my blood rush to my head. It was too much. I struck him in the face and would have killed him if I had had my way. They arrested me; the Judge freed me, and here I am."

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As she finished, the words of the employé of the office who told me the story rang again in my ears:

"It's Cram's own fault, he is too good to them."

Great God! I felt so little when I went away. Here was a real heroine.

"Could you give me any money for my little ones?" she asked. Not a trace of the beggar in her attitude or voice. I humbly gave her what I could and considered myself happy to have shaken hands with a real human being.

ROBBERS OF THE PEACE

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One of the greatest injustices to the poor is the right that the charities arrogate to themselves to visit them whenever they choose. Once you depend upon charity all privacy is gone. The sanctity of the home is destroyed. It is as though the family were living in some one else's—in the charities—home. The investigator comes into the house unannounced any time of the day or night, questions anybody she finds in the house, criticises the meals, the curtains; goes around to the grocery, to the neighbours, looking for a "clue" that will give to the institution the right to cease helping the particular "case," to "cut her" as they say. This continual living in fear of the investigator, coupled with the attitude of the neighbours and merchants who have all been told that Mrs. D. is a charge of the charities, pauperises the poor to such an extent that most of them lose all sense of shame and pride. Mere rags they are, that try to fit themselves to surroundings, and the children, oh! the children of the poor! They are the greatest sufferers of all. They are continually cross-examined by the investigators. Never are they trusted, and the word "liar," is always on the lips of their torturers. They must not play like other children, and if they make an attempt to live their young lives, on the slightest childish quarrel with their playmates the fact that they are depending on charity is thrown in their face. "Charity kids," the other children call them. If they claim at the grocers that the bread is stale the fact that the mother depends on charity and consequently has no right to pride, is brought up, and though they pay actual money they are not given actual value for it. They must not play or stay in the hall. The janitor will scold them more than any of the other children. The "Why don't you go to work" is repeated every second. Their ages are always disputed. An applicant's child is always over fourteen (working age) in the eyes of the neighbours, janitor, groceryman, butcher, investigator and all the rest of the torturers.

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A woman's pension has been discontinued *because her children looked too well*—they were "the picture of health," and as the investigator could not understand it the pension was discontinued. Another woman's pension, and many more before her and many more after her, was discontinued because she dressed too neatly. (By the way, the woman was a dressmaker by trade and as she had no sewing-machine she did it all by hand.) Like the sword of Damocles is the charity demon, hanging over its victims.

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"Who visits her?"

"Does she receive men at night?"

"Does she go out in the evening?"

"Does she buy butter?"

"Don't you think she looks in the mirror a little too much? Where does she go?"

"Does she go to moving pictures?"

These are but a few of the questions that an investigator asks of the neighbours and dealers, and beware if she, the applicant, has ever quarrelled with them. But more than all this is the persecution of coming into the house without being announced, so that the poor woman might not be saved the pain of her friends (whom she does not want to enlighten) meeting the investigator.

The sanctity of the home is guaranteed by the Constitution of the land. It is a law. Are the laws different for rich and poor? In his own house one may refuse to receive when and whom he likes. This inhuman system of investigation is ruining the homes of the poor, driving away their boys, their daughters, and making their escape from pauperism impossible.

I know of a boy to whom his mother had given vinegar to drink because his cheeks were too red to please the investigator! I know of a woman who when her husband died did not know that she was pregnant. Two months later she knew it, but she had already told the investigator that she was not. In fear that the investigator would not believe that she did not know and would accuse her of immorality and cut off her pension, she performed a criminal operation, infected herself and died. Such is the dread of the "investigator," and almost all the applicants are women, and all the investigators are women—mothers—sisters, sweethearts—but their trade has hardened them so much that judging by their actions one would think them wild beasts. And still the Managers think that they are "too tender hearted." It is the whole system of organised charity that is criminal—debasement both the giver and he that receives, and this is not meant for the charities of this country alone. It is meant for the charities of the whole world over.

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"He who giveth to the poor," is no more. A sum of money is given to men who make it their business to make the life of the one who needs so miserable that he should prefer starvation and the grave to their help; and these are the really worthy ones, while the successful applicant, the one who can stand the whole vile process, is generally the most miserable creature on earth, with no sentiment of pride or shame, and often is not really in need. To their everlasting shame charities, organised charity, has created a new type. The professional pauper. These professional paupers have a regular system of obtaining money. They know the names and locations of all charitable institutions, know what to say to one and what to another—bribe the janitor and silence the grocer and butcher. Borrow children from neighbours so as to make the family appear bigger, and sell to others, novices, their knowledge, or work on the basis of percentage. And for all this only Charity, criminal, organised Charity, is to blame.

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If men feel that through their fault, or the system which they continue, their brothers and sisters suffer, that the children starve and perish, then let them give *personally*, with their own hands, and if they want to investigate the truth of what the poor have told them let them go and do it *personally*. If they do not want to go then they shall not.

But giving to the organised charities is worse than stealing the last crust of bread from the lost in the desert. Man's pride, his sense of shame is his last property, the only one he has that might help him in his struggle when he is down. Organised charity robs him of this last thing, robs him and his wife and his children and children's children. And this is the reason why those who have once applied to charities have remained their "regular customers."

THE SIGN AT THE DOOR

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Amongst the "discontinued pensioners" I visited, I found a young Jewish woman with two children, one eight and one six years old. From the reports I learned that she came to New York five years ago from Russia, had worked some time in an embroidery factory and had been disabled in an accident—lost her right arm.

The report also spoke of a fruitless search made to find her husband, who, the woman claimed, had deserted her in Russia and was now in New York. The investigator claimed that this was all a tissue of lies, that Mrs. Baum's husband was a myth, as the children whom she had questioned admitted never having had a "papa."

A certain Jewish paper in New York publishes daily the pictures of men who desert their families, and other details about them. In the report it was stated that the investigator asked Mrs. Baum for a picture of her husband, but the woman refused it, saying that she did not want to brand the father of her children. The report ended with the remark that the whole thing was a tissue of lies and demanded closer examination. It is interesting to know that the report was made by a new investigator, working in a district formerly entrusted to a woman with whom this investigator was at dagger points, because of some love affair. Later on, the same investigator spoke about Mrs. Baum's severe illness and the temporary removal of the children to an orphan asylum.

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The pension was kept up for eighteen more months, then suddenly discontinued. When I read this I tried to think out the reason for the discontinuance. Was the woman placed in a hospital for incurables? Had she fallen? Had she found her husband? The discontinuance dated eight months prior to my reading of the report, and although I knew how many times one can change his abode in New York, still I set out to hunt the woman up. For more than a week I spent every moment I could spare trying to trace her, but without success. In despair, I wrote ten letters, the first three

to the addresses I knew and on the rest of them I just inscribed her name and the name of one of the lateral streets of the lower East Side. In the letter I wrote a few words asking for an appointment and giving my address and asking for hers. I hoped that the woman had notified the Post Office of her changed address, and placed not a little confidence in the searching qualities of the New York post office employés. To my great astonishment I had a reply the next day, and an address was given of a house I had passed twenty times in my search.

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However, to the Montgomery Street house I directed my steps that evening. On the way I was overtaken by a heavy rain and looked more like a wet rat than a man when I knocked at the door. I confess that I thought more of getting dry than of the cause of my errand. Curious, but personal discomfort makes one forget all remote considerations; the whole man is taken possession of by the desire to get his bearings, to right himself—much like the swinging pendulum when an accident has crippled the machine that sets it in motion.

As soon as I entered Mrs. Baum's house and told who I was, I took off my coat, with her permission, and hung it on the back of a chair which I pushed near the kitchen stove, while I seated myself thereon and tried to regain my wits.

The woman was alone. The children were at some kind neighbours. Oh! how painful it was to see her at a little table near the window trying to make bunches of artificial flowers! How she twisted and turned the wires with one hand, with the left, while with the stump of the crippled right she kept the bunch on the table. She had encased the stump of her broken arm in a frame of wood so as to suffer less when working. She used her teeth, her chin, forehead, knees and armpits to help form a bunch, and the work went slowly, slowly. So little did she earn that she did not care to stop when a guest came, though I felt right along that she was consumed with curiosity. She lived in one room, which was kitchen, dining-room, and bedroom for her and the children, and also workroom. It did not take me very long to get dry, but it took less time for my coat to catch fire. Before I had time to put out the fire the whole back was gone. I had a hard time to keep the woman quiet on her chair. A cry of fire would have created a holocaust in that fire-trap.

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When all was quiet again, I sent a neighbour's boy to my home to bring me another coat, while I seated myself near the table and began my questioning. But I had no luck. A knock at the door was followed by the entrance of a matron who immediately asked me who I was. I answered her very politely that I had business of my own with the lady and was not obliged to answer to strangers.

"Who is that man?" was now the question put to the crippled woman, who was just twisting a rose with her stump.

"I don't know," she said, shrugging her shoulders.

"You don't know?" sarcastically. "You don't know who the man is who sits near you in his shirtsleeves?"

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"Madame," I tried to explain, "I came here during the rain, hung my coat on the back of a chair. It caught fire, and here I am." But the matron would not hear my explanation. She slammed the door and went out, cursing, talking loudly and insultingly.

The woman was as pale as death. She looked from me to the door, and back again. It was my turn to ask a question.

"Who is that woman?"

"The investigator of an institution that pays my rent."

So saying, the woman's head sank on the table and she wept bitterly. She did not weep long. Real sorrow is deep and short. There is no time for artistic posing when the knife has pierced the heart.

The broken-down figure rose, brushed away some tears, and asked me:

"And now, sir, tell me, who are you and what do you want?"

She stood before me defiantly, as though to say: "Make it quick, you bird of evil."

"Madame," I began, "I am making a supplementary investigation on behalf of the charities, and I want to look into the reason of your discontinuance."

Hearing this she retreated, laid off her defiance, and sat down. I took out my notebook and started my questioning.

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"Have you now an idea where your husband is?"

"Of course I have, and this started the whole trouble," she began with animation.

"How so?" I asked.

"For four years I looked and searched without any result. I hoped and hoped, and the charities helped me also. I did not want to publish his picture in the papers. Then I had that accident in the factory. Great God! what that woman, Mrs. Sol (an investigator) made me suffer! Never did she believe a word I said. Called me beggar, liar, crazy, and all the ugly names in the language. I stood it all because I hoped that one day I would get rid of them. Suddenly, one morning, while

going to work, I saw *him* going into a door on Greene Street. I ran after him and throwing my arms around him, cried: 'Chaim, Chaim.'

Mrs. Baum sobbed again and repeated her husband's name, as though she again saw him. After a few moments she resumed her narrative.

"He looked at me, with strange eyes, as though he saw me for the first time. Meanwhile a crowd had collected. I still kept calling 'Chaim! don't you know me? Your wife, Leah?' 'What wife Leah?' he asked. 'Are you crazy?' Ah! my own husband; the father of my children, did not want to recognise me. The crowd grew. I kept at him. A policeman arrived and forced me to let him go. He quickly entered the door and I ran to the charities and told them my story and gave them the street and house number. I was told to come the next day, when some one would be sent with me—a special man they had for such errands. What a day and what a night I passed! The next morning, bright and early, I was at the office. A young man accompanied me and I led the way to the house. We entered and the man asked the bookkeeper if a Mr. Baum was not working there. He looked in all the books and could find no such name. On my advice the young man asked permission to visit the shop. We were allowed to go up. We looked—he was not there. Yet I was certain that I had seen him enter."

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The investigator again treated me to such epithets as "crazy woman, liar, etc." Coming down, I begged the bookkeeper to look over the names of all the employés again. I thought perhaps he was working as a driver, clerk—or at some other job. To get rid of me he asked, 'How does he look?' I had his picture with me and I showed it to the man. He grew pale, and exclaimed: 'That's our boss, Mr. Ap.' All at once he realised what he had said and bent his head over his books. I was thunderstruck. Here he was, the boss of all this and his wife and children starving and begging. So that's the kind of a man he is? The investigator asked the bookkeeper:

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"'Is Mr. Ap. here?'

"'No.'

"'When do you expect him?'

"'He is gone to Europe.'

"'When did he go?' I jumped up.

"'I don't know,' he answered, and we could get no more information from him. I cried and pleaded—it did not help.

"We returned to the office, where the Manager was told of all that had happened. He listened very patiently and then said: 'Give me the picture—we will attend to that now. Meanwhile, you keep quiet.' Some additional money was given to me and they said that I must not go to the factory. They would watch the place and if it was true that he had gone to Europe we would have to wait his return."

The woman's chest heaved, and cold sweat appeared on her brow and face and arms, as though her whole body were on the rack. She rested a few minutes, drank some water and resumed.

"I waited. True, I could not keep away from the place. Several times I walked past in the hope of getting a glimpse of him. I knew that if I could meet him quietly and talk to him he might relent. I might show him his children. Perhaps he had not recognised me. I had changed so much in the years that had passed since we had last seen one another.

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"He was not to be seen, however. Yes, he has grown rich—very rich—he did not want me any longer. He has changed his name—perhaps he has married another woman. All these thoughts came to me. My God!" The woman sobbed again.

"For weeks and weeks my only occupation was to go from home to the charities, from there to Greene Street and back. The Manager of the office at the charities spoke to me several times and asked me details about our former life and condition when we married. I told him all. The truth as ever. One day as I walked down from the elevated on First Street and Third Avenue I saw him again, but this time he was not alone. A woman leaned on his arm. What I suffered! What I endured! I did not approach him. I feared he might again go away. I ran to the office, and told them that he was back. Again I was counselled to keep still. They would attend to it. The next and the third day I asked the Manager whether he had any results. 'No, he had not seen him.' Then on the fourth day he called me into his private room and told me that Mr. Ap. denied that he had ever married me.

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"'Have you a marriage certificate?' he asked.

"I had none. We were married only religiously by a rabbi and had no certificate.

"'But,' I said, 'I have his children.'

"'He does not recognise them. He says he knew you in Russia, true enough, but that he never married you. When I told him your situation he agreed to give you enough money to go back to Russia.'

"You understand?" the woman exclaimed. "Send me away from here."

"Of course, I refused and asked the Manager to help me force him to recognise me and his

children. I grew bitter, and wept and cried. He quieted me down and told me to go home. That he would see that all would be well.

"The next day and the next passed without result. The Manager was very gentle, very nice. Then on the following day, no, on the next after that, he told me that Mr. Ap. had agreed to give me one thousand dollars if I would go back to Russia immediately. Of course, I did not want to accept. He was my husband, the father of my children. He had to admit that, though I had no certificate. I looked about to find a man from our village, a man who knew him, a man who knew we were married. I found none. Then I went back to the office and asked for the photograph. But the Manager would not return it. Mr. Ap. had taken it. I cried, I menaced, but could not get my picture back. Not only did they not help me to legally force him to recognise me, to support me, but they took away the only weapon I had—the picture.

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"The Manager kept on urging me to take the one thousand dollars and go to Russia. 'It's kind enough of him to do that. After all, I believe him more than you, and he says that he never married you.'

"So he told me, to my face, a week after that I was 'discontinued.' 'What is that?' I asked. 'Take the one thousand dollars and go away.'

"I was put out in the street in the dead of winter. My children almost froze. I ran to Greene Street. They would not let me in. I went to the charities. The Manager just told me: 'People that can get one thousand dollars need no charity.'

"Finally, a society paid my rent and I was again under a roof, but I was afraid to say anything about my husband, and when they asked me I answered that he was dead. How could I say otherwise? I had nothing to prove my case. My one piece of evidence was taken away. He had changed his name. I had no letters, no certificate. Now I will have more trouble, through you, with that woman who saw you."

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"And what do you intend to do now?" I asked.

"I have my plans. I expect some one from my village who knows him and who knows that we were married. I am saving every cent I can for the steamship agency to buy a ticket."

She bent down over her work again. Meanwhile my coat was brought. I took leave, promised to look into the matter and went out.

In a few minutes I was in Greene Street. I looked up the number. Above the door hung a big sign, announcing the business of the firm, and on the door, near the knob, was nailed another little sign, with black letters on white enamel:

"Member of organised charity."

All was now clear why the woman was not helped in her fight, and why she was coerced through the "discontinuance." I remembered the Manager's answer:

"Who is supporting this institution? The poor or the rich?"

And of course they had to work for the ones that were supporting them.

WHAT IS DONE IN HIS NAME?

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Again, thinking how charitable institutions shield those who support them, I must speak of a case which is similar to the one just described in more than one detail. The only difference is in the fact that it happened in another town, instead of in New York. I was present in the office of the Institution when the woman was advised to accept a certain amount of money and go to New York. The woman, after suffering hunger and cold with her children for a long time finally accepted the most shameful conditions ever imposed upon a woman, upon a mother. She was compelled to give her children to the other woman. I was present when the investigator, Mrs. G., herself a mother of children, explained to the woman that it would be best to accept five hundred dollars and give her children up.

"You will not bring them up as well as they will. They have money, and if you really love your children, sacrifice yourself for them." That was the substance of her argument, and when the woman cried and pointed out that she had another child coming from this unnatural father, the investigator insulted her most grossly, calling her a prostitute. In the end she advised her to keep it secret, because if the other woman, the new Mrs. Schneider, heard about it, heard that the man had not ceased his relations with his wife, she might "get sore on the whole thing," and though the woman had a good case of adultery and bigamy against her husband the Institution—so active in other emergencies, such as strikes, when they send out scabs—did not do the slightest thing to help the woman to get justice. She was destitute, a foreigner and was helpless alone. She haunted her husband's place of business, a restaurant, from where she was ejected by the ever-obliging policeman on the corner.

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To quiet things the husband disappeared for a few weeks. The restaurant was running on the second woman's name. This legal nicety closed the doors to the poor mother.

Driven to desperation by the hunger of her children she sent them to the other woman a few times to ask for food. This was given to them, but not a morsel was sent to the mother. Meanwhile, the charities remained absolutely inactive. They even refused to pay the fare of the mother and children back to New York, on the ground that she could not say *how* she would live there. Not a penny was given. "Accept the five hundred dollars," was their advice.

After a time she was trapped with a man in a hotel, and arrest for adultery hanging over her head like the sword of Damocles, the woman agreed to sign papers releasing the husband from any responsibility, was given a few dollars and a ticket to New York, and all ended here to the glory of organised charity the world over.

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Shall I say that the whole trapping affair was engineered by the husband and the second woman? And yet I have suspicions of "another party" who helped. I am very anxious to find out whether, on the list of yearly contributors, the "gentleman" in the case has not increased his yearly gift to help the poor and needy and recognise the good offices of the institution in his own case. And if it is not on the list, some one has been privately favoured.

THE PICTURE

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In the course of time I became very suspicious of every record in the Charity Institutions. Not one appeared to me truthful. I knew I could not trust them any more than I would trust police records that are made up not to give information but very often only to shield a particular policeman. They are coloured so as to give the impression that it was difficult to procure the information. Often the detective sent out to get the particulars spends the time in a saloon or gambling house, then on a few meagre details he makes up his report. When contradicted by the "case" he simply says the man lies. The same thing happens with the investigations of charitable institutions. Knowing this I suspected every record of being far from the facts. In my investigations I made it a rule not to take *anything* for granted from the reports, but to look into the matter myself.

One rainy day I looked through the records and laid aside the ones I intended to work upon the next day. I decided to reinvestigate cases where the pension had been discontinued. By this time it was very difficult for me to work. The investigators feared me and had drilled their "customers" to so answer my questions as to conform to the report they had made on the case. Wherever I went, under whatever guise, I was anticipated. The people were on the qui-vive and I often had to give up my investigation without marked results.

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At first I did not know to what to attribute my non-success and the Manager grew impatient and spurred me on. "Results, results. If you don't bring us extra information you are of no great use to us." Such was the tenor of his speech. They needed "extra information." Right or wrong, by hook or crook, but extra information to give an excuse for my pay envelope. But it did not take long before I learned the cause of my ill success. The people were warned.

I knew of several investigators who did it and I could have reported them and had them discharged, but I disliked to do so. So I reported to the Manager that some one had warned them and that I was working on a clue to find out who had done it, when I would report. Naturally this made them stop their interference. This subterfuge gave me time to do other work—investigate the "discontinued" cases. It was work for myself and I had no need for hurry, nor did I need to make a report of my findings.

I copied a few addresses and some other particulars and the next day I set out on my tour.

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One of the cases that particularly interested me was the case of a young Irish lady, a widow with four children, who had been pensioned for four years. The report of the investigator was a continuous description of misery and misfortune. One of the children, at least, was always sick. At times there were three in bed and the mother too was in an "awful condition." This was so from 1908 to 1910, until the month of December of that year, the reports never being farther apart than two weeks. Then, all of a sudden, the report was discontinued for two months, until the end of February, and was then very much colder than usual. It simply mentioned that Mrs. G. was much better and the children well. The next one, made in April, contained an interesting item. The older child, nine years old, was selling papers. "The woman denied that she knew anything about it but I saw him myself," read the report. For May of the same year there were three reports, the last one speaking of a "pail of beer and cigarettes, in company with other men and women." It advises the application of the "test." Then, after that, one big word. "Discontinued."

It took me some time before I found Mrs. G. She had moved three times in eight months and when I at last found her she was living in 63rd Street, in a house near the river. Her dwelling was more like the hole of a water rat than the quarters of a human being in a civilised city of the New World. A mattress on the floor, a folding bed with torn sides, on an egg box a gas stove, a rocking chair that had seen better days, some rags hanging on the walls, this was the furniture of the house. And the woman herself. She fitted excellently into the picture. It was as though a painter had grouped them together as the subject of a masterpiece of misery, to hold the world up to shame. Tall and angular, her hair dishevelled, her face unclean, with dress torn, through which greyish dirty linen peeped out, with bare feet in a pair of shoes picked up from a garbage can,

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she stood in the middle of the room and looked wonderingly at me, not knowing to what she owed my visit. She had hardly enough strength to answer my questions. There were no children in the house. I told her who I was. Her face lit up and she asked me about the investigator—a man—who was in charge of the district. Pointblank I put the question:

"How are you making a living?"

"I am not doing anything," she answered.

"Yes, but from where do you get money to buy food?"

"I am not buying any."

"But you don't live without food!"

She shrugged her shoulders and turned away in despair.

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I waited a few moments, and as I got no answer I repeated my question. All in vain. She would not answer. As I sat there the door was opened and a little shrunken, dirty boy of about eight years, barefoot and wrapped up in a pair of overalls, came in.

"I got a good big one," he said, as he put a package on the folding bed. He turned round, and saw me. Mother and child looked at one another understandingly. Without another word the boy disappeared. The mother manipulated the package from the folding bed to the window sill.

"From where did the boy get this package?" I asked.

"From nowhere—he did not get it—he took it, from—"

"Why! my good lady, do you allow him to steal? Do you know where it will land him?"

"In the hospital," she answered, as she gave me the package. I tore off the paper,—a piece of cooked chicken, the remainder of a steak, three old rolls, all of them with the stamp of the garbage can, with spit and sawdust on them, and on one morsel the butt of a cigarette.

"You see," she said, "they can't arrest him for *that*," pointing to the package. "He gets it from 'Martin's' restaurant."

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I tried to get at the reason of her being "discontinued," and after a time I had to ask her outright. From her talk I understood that she wanted me to believe that Mr. S., the investigator, was very attentive to her, and she had responded to his advances. That he would sit with her at night and that he even took her to a moving picture show once. I looked at her and did not believe a word she said. Mr. S. was a young man and this woman could hardly inspire an old drunkard with such sentiments. She understood the reason of my apparent doubt.

"I see you don't believe it." From under a broken mirror she brought forth a picture of a lovely young woman of the pronounced Irish type, with loose hair and clear-cut features.

"That's me," she explained, "three years ago—when Mr. S. knew me," and as she talked she put her blouse in order and tried to look like the picture. It was hard to find a resemblance, but it was undoubtedly her image. With the picture she tried to tempt me. "A few weeks of decent care and I am again the picture," she explained, thinking that this was the only way to re-enter into the possession of the pension.

"Why were you discontinued?"

"It's all my fault. I had bragged about it to a neighbour and the neighbour told it to another one who was in Mrs. S.'s care, and she reported it to him. But I got my lesson. I'd keep mum. The boys are out."

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From the woman I learned how he used to get extra money for her every time, on the plea that a child was ill, that she was ill, a whole traffic in pity, and then I understood the record and understood the sudden change of face and the discontinuance.

I tried to explain to the woman that here was a wrong way. With no success, however. She told me that the former investigator, the one before Mr. S., was also very friendly, and about him she never told. She seemed to think that I was sent by Mr. S. for the same purpose, and again and again she attracted my attention to the loveliness of the picture, and appealed in its name. There must have been a trace of a great disgust on my face, for she cleaned her hands and combed herself as she spoke. From the emergency money I gave her a few dollars and told her that I would visit her again and try to get her restored on the pension list. She took the money, but I felt that she was disappointed. Was the woman in her insulted? For she still assured me of her secrecy.

Before I went away I learned that two children had not been in the house for the last four or five days.

"And where do you think they are?" I asked.

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"One, I know, went on a freight, and the other must be somewhere." At the door she again stopped me.

"Here's my picture, if you want it!" she said pleadingly, as she tended it to me. I felt it would have

been a great insult to have refused her gift, to destroy the hope she had that the picture might awaken desires and that these desires might bring her rent and food. There was a glimmer of hope when I promised to do all in my power to restore her pension.

Instead of going to my next address I loitered in the neighbourhood of 63rd Street, near the river. I knew that Mr. S. was in his district and I hoped to find him. I was rehearsing mentally the words in which I should clothe my opinion of his behaviour, when all at once I saw him coming from a house. I approached him, called him into a saloon, and without a word I showed him the picture.

"What about that?" I asked.

"She was all right once—that's how she looked, the cat," he explained jokingly. "Did you get at her? You—you! She was all right once, how is she now?" He took the picture and looked at it with interest, probably remembering his debauches. I immediately saw that I could learn more about the matter by handling the case dexterously, and I learned, oh! I did learn how the money of the poor is spent—how payment is taken for the bread and coal and rent, and how, when he has "another one," a fresh case, the "cat" is simply discontinued.

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Mr. S. was a man of about forty and had been fifteen years in the business. He knew all the ropes and finished up with a promise to take me to a young French widow who was a "peach," a new case, as he explained, twinkling his eye knowingly. He still looked at the picture of the Irish woman.

"You would never think her to be an applicant. She has such a distinguished appearance. Oh! she's a peach—if she only could keep mum," he said, referring to the French widow.

I offered him another glass, and when this was consumed I playfully suggested: "Let's go up to Mrs. G.—just for fun."

At first S. refused, but as his eyes again caught the face in the picture he ordered another glass, and then standing up he said: "Come." He did not know her address so I had to lead the way.

We knocked and Mrs. G. opened the door and invited us in. But S. had only one look at her, when he ran down the stairs. I followed him. He was dumbfounded and kept on repeating: "Is that her? Is that her?"

I put the picture before his eyes: "How do you like the change?" I asked. "It's good charitable work. When you get another one the 'cat' is simply discontinued." I repeated his words.

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A few months afterwards I saw the same woman in the street. She was decently dressed and looked much better. Remorse or fear of my denunciation had made S. provide for immediate needs. Soon she was restored on the list and again the oldest son was ill and the third one was in bed and all the tricks were resumed to have the institution pay for the lust of the coward.

THE PRICE OF LIFE

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The indignities to which the poor are subjected in the offices of charity and by the employés of these organisations are of such a nature that it is my honest belief that criminals get more consideration in the police station, before the judge or in prison. After all, what are the poor guilty of? Is poverty a crime? Is it not the inevitable result of the present organisation of society? Is it possible that in the present industrial system there should be no poor and no helpless human beings? I am sure that the people who contribute tens of thousands of dollars to these institutions do it in order to help those whom they have in the course of their lives and business despoiled of their right to life and its necessities. A few scenes which I witnessed at the charities will suffice to give an idea of what the applicants have to undergo at the hands of the officers of the institutions, whether they get relief or not.

The sweetest word they ever use in connection with the poor is "derelict." A quotation made by a sister institution (A Free Loan Association), will give the essence of what they think and in what spirit they act towards the poor.

Says the President of this institution in his Twentieth Annual Report:

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"The object of this Society is to loan money to those in need, instead of giving alms, and thus assist respectable people, whose character and self-respect will not permit them to receive alms, etc., etc."

So, none of the people who apply for charity are respectable people or have any self-respect! This is the spirit of all the charity workers toward an applicant. Once a man or a woman has applied for help he is no longer respectable, he has lost his self-respect. He is a "derelict." It speaks ill for humanity that there has not yet been one poor person who has taken revenge for all the injustices and insults heaped upon his brethren! It shows how degraded they are through hunger. Not that they are inherently coarse. Oh, no! but weakness, physical weakness to which all those who apply to charity are reduced before they ever come to the office. Once in the mill they are

ground. I will leave the investigators for a while and show how the "derelicts" are treated in the office.

I must not forget to mention that they are frequently called to the office at nine A. M. and left in the waiting-room until five P. M., when they are again told to come to-morrow, as the committee before which they were called to appear has departed. Meanwhile, they had to sit there and hear the insults to which the others are subjected, and stay without food. Mr. Cram once told me that this sitting in the waiting-room was a very good "test" of real want, for it has happened that many of them never came back when they were again called.

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"Once they pass through the waiting-room they are easy to manage," he assured me. "They get their education."

The waiting-room is the school. I wonder how many of those who could not stand the "test" turned the gas jet on. How many of them jumped into the river! How many went to the street. Too bad we cannot know all the crimes of charity.

A woman, Bertha S., about thirty years old, still good looking, despite the misery she has passed through, is called before the Manager. She has two small children whom she has left with a neighbour. She has been called for nine A. M. As it is her first experience with the charities she is at the doors at eight-thirty A. M. When the doors swing open at nine-ten she is almost frozen. She had been waiting a full half hour. She shows her letter of admission and is allowed in the building. The whole day, until four-thirty P. M., she stands in the waiting-room, sometimes walking around and crying, at other times sitting nervously twisting her hands in despair and calling the names of her two children.

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At four-thirty, she and all the other women were told that on account of the cold weather the committee would not meet that day and they should come the next day. The office boy who brought the news to them meanwhile permitted himself a joke, saying "The show is off for to-night. If you like it, tell your friends."

The next day the building was so overcrowded with applicants that more than fifty had to stand the whole day. Bertha S. looked to be the most unfortunate of all. Her nervousness was painful. At three-thirty P. M., the manager began to call the applicants into his room. Every time the door swung open she hoped or feared that now was her turn, and when she saw each time that another was called she became more and more nervous. Finally, at five, she was called in. From a side door I entered the room. With the Manager sat a few other men. They looked her up and down, measuring her from her toes to her head, as though she had committed some crime. Then one of the men, a well fed, red-faced, thick-bellied brute, looked in a record purporting to be the investigator's report and the third degree, the most inhuman one I have ever witnessed, started:

"How old are you?" he yelled at the woman without looking at her.

"Thirty."

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"How many children have you?"

"Two."

"How old are they?"

"One six years and, one—"

"You lie—liars you all are—how old are your children?"

"One is six years old and one—"

"You liar, you shameless liar, six years old? Ha!" and so saying this man jumped up from his chair. "Six years old, eh, and she goes around to moving picture shows and stays out the whole night. Six years old?" He approached the woman. "And what do you think, do you think we don't know what *you* do? We know all right."

"But, mister," the woman tried to speak.

"Keep quiet. Don't talk." This was another man's advice, whereupon the first one continued.

"Here," showing her the record, "we have it in black and white—daughter goes to one moving picture show and the mother to another one."

"But, mister," the woman tried again, but the man grew angry, his fat body shook, his well-fed face flushed and he delivered himself of all the venom there was in him.

"And you dare to apply for charity. A woman of your kind, an immoral woman. And tell me and all these gentlemen here that your daughter is six years old. You are a liar, a street woman, that's what you are."

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At this point the woman cried out and fell headlong on the floor. One of the other men looked in the record and remarked that Mr. W. who had cross-examined the woman had made a mistake, as the record was not that of Mrs. Bertha S., but another applicant's. I watched the whole scene and thought: "Great God! How he will have to apologise now!" But no—not a word of apology. She was only a poor woman, a "derelict." I wonder what the "gentlemen" in question, or any other member of that committee would have done to any one who would have dared to insult his

wife or sister or daughter in the same manner.

Mr. W. bent down, looked again in the record book, and after convincing himself, said: "Yes, I made a mistake." Meanwhile, the woman kept on sobbing bitterly.

The secretary munched at his cigar rather nervously.

"Give her five dollars," Mr. W. said to the Manager, and the poor woman was led out, the price of her degradation in her hand. I followed her to an elevated station. She sobbed bitterly the whole way. She never appeared at the office again, but a few months later the following notice appeared in the papers:

MOTHER AND CHILD
CRAZED BY HUNGER

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Entire Family Has Been Without Food or Roof for Three Months.

As Patrolman B—— was walking along H—— Street, Brooklyn, early yesterday morning, he observed a woman and two children, a girl of twelve and a girl of six, standing in a door way half clothed, each nestling close to the other to keep warm. Apparently they failed in this, for the mother and children were blue from cold and were shivering.

The officer spoke to the woman. But she did not answer. He spoke to her again and she raised her eyes to him. The eyes were those of an insane person, and the officer took the mother and children to the S—— Street police station. There the police fed the family and the woman gained sufficient strength to speak.

She told the police that she was Mrs. S——. She was deserted by her husband and for the last three months, since she was dispossessed, she and her children lived in cellars and doorways. After telling that much of her story the woman collapsed. She became hysterical, insane again.

The police began to question the elder girl, the twelve year old May. May spoke only a few words and her mind began to wander. Like her mother she became hysterical.

The woman and her two children were then taken to the —— Court before Magistrate D ——. The magistrate at once saw that he was dealing with an unbalanced woman and he ordered her sent to the observation ward of the Kings County Hospital.

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In the Children's Court, Justice G—— found that the children were suffering from starvation and exposure. They were sent away with the mother.

It looked doubtful yesterday whether Mrs. S—— would ever completely recover from the insanity into which she was thrown by months of starvation and homelessness.

AIR—FROM FIFTH FLOOR TO BASEMENT

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The head investigator, a woman who was once a socialist, and considers herself now a social worker, was announced to lecture. Her subject was "Advice to consumptives living in a large city." The subject was interesting and the lecturer an acquaintance of mine, so I decided to go and hear her. When the doors opened the hall was crowded with people. It was in her own district and she had decided to make a big show. All the poor depending on her were ordered to the lecture. Willy nilly, they had to go.

An interesting lot they were as they sat huddled up in old rags, their street clothes left at home, those they had on the poorest they could find. All pale, haggard, hungry, they really needed the advice.

Mrs. B. was a good talker and had her subject well in hand. Her son is a physician and from him she got all the fine points, figures and explanations. She started out very convincingly and proved that poverty and ignorance go hand in hand and are the father and mother of tuberculosis. She went on to explain the absolute necessity of rich and wholesome food (What irony—they that get two or three dollars a week shall have rich and wholesome food!), diversion, quiet, and above all "Air, fresh air all the time—Live on the top floor, do not mind the few stairs more! Sleep on the roof in the summer, and keep your windows open! For God's sake keep your windows open!... Let the sunshine clean your room—Light and air are the greatest enemies of microbes and tuberculosis and the greatest friend of man, especially the one touched with the white plague. Breathe, breathe every time you get a chance. Purify your lungs and keep under God's blue roof the greater part of your time."

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Thus she finished. There was the usual applause and the usual questions by some outsiders, and that was all. At the finish we walked together, Mrs. B. and I, for a half hour and we spoke about the poor and their condition, about the iniquity of the present system, and her former work for Socialism, and she told me how she had pawned her watch and chain to pay the printers that were setting up the first Socialist weekly. Naturally I was astonished to hear that. I knew that she was one of the most cruel questioners at the office. If something was to be found out she was appealed to. She had a heart of stone, of granite, and her sensuous mouth could assume a smile

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that set the poor applicant trembling.

"And where is he now, your husband? Do you think that I am such a fool as to believe a single word of what you say?" And when the woman would cry she would say "Rot, rot, rubbish. I am too old in the business." Such was her attitude. How could she be so sincere when she spoke to others? How could she pawn her watch for a struggling Socialist paper? Was she once better, had her work killed her heart? Thus was I thinking when I left her, and was already trying to excuse her because I found that I too had, in my work for the Charity Institution, lost a good deal of my faith in mankind.

Some weeks afterwards, I was investigating the case of a tailor who was taken to the hospital suffering from the white plague. He had a wife and four children ranging from three to fourteen years. The woman had applied to charity and the office had a suspicion that the man belonged to an organisation that paid a sick benefit and was consequently not entitled to charity. I found out, through the secretary, that the man had once been a member but having fallen in arrears with his dues he was disqualified and was not receiving any benefits. The family was living on a first floor rear apartment in Monroe Street, two rooms, where the sunshine never comes, with windows opening in the yard, an ill-smelling dirty yard, and the people had no idea of hygiene. They never kept separate the dishes and pillows used by the sick one. They ate from them and slept on them.

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The children, pale and sick, three of them short-sighted, the mother and little child with inflamed eyes, were in a horrible condition.

I immediately advised the office and succeeded in getting the family moved to the Bronx, near a park, and on the fifth floor. So little were the children accustomed to light that the first few days they felt dizzy. Their clothes and bedding was disinfected. Hurriedly the family was put on the pension list, rent, coal and three dollars per week. It was not much, it was not enough, but it was the best I could obtain for the unfortunate people.

A few weeks later the oldest girl too was taken to the hospital and the mother was treated in one of the clinics in the neighbourhood. She obtained two quarts of milk a day free.

They had not been long in the country—four or five years; had previously lived in a little village in Northern Russia. The man was a dealer in grains there, was always in the open air. The sudden change to a big city, a sweatshop, was too much for him, too much for all of them. Several months later, while I was in the neighbourhood, I went to visit the family. At the door of the fifth floor, I was told they had moved away long ago. Where? The people did not know, nor did the janitor, nor did the neighbours. When I returned to the office I looked up the records and found their new address, 171st Street. I took a note of it, and as my work brought me there a few days later, I called in. I was astonished to find the people living in a basement—the rooms were next to the engine room. It was a big apartment house and the heat in the rooms was suffocating.

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"Woman," I cried, "what have you done? Why did you move from the other place?"

"The investigator told me to," was her answer.

"But you are killing yourself, ruining the broken health of your children."

She shrugged her shoulders, the children coughed, and even the baby had eyeglasses on. It was the district of Mrs. B.—the investigator who lectured so well on tuberculosis. I waited for her in the office and asked her why she had moved the family from the top floor to the basement.

"I can't run up so many stairs every day," she answered angrily. "I have a big district and they all live on top floors. Basements are cheaper and it is easier for me," she went on.

"But, Mrs. B., the whole family is touched by the plague. You know better than they do how necessary it is for them to live in light and airy rooms. You lecture on the subject."

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To all this the investigator answered, "It's easy to lecture but to climb so many floors a day is too hard. Let them live in the basement. They will not die. It's not so terrible. Let them sit in the park ... let them go up on the roof."

No amount of talk could persuade her that it was dangerous for the people to live, eat, sleep in the basement, and when I had succeeded in convincing the manager that a change should be made, and I called on the woman, she was already so drilled by the investigator that she claimed her legs hurt her and her heart was weak and I had to give it up. She would not move from the basement.

A second child was taken to the hospital in a few months, but as a recompense for the mother's good behaviour the investigator did not, as usual, reduce the pension of the family.

The father died, the two older girls died, the mother with the other children returned to Russia to live ... to die.

Up to now I have said so much about the heartlessness of the investigators that naturally the question arises: "If they were good-hearted women, and if the men in charge of the charities were better men, would that solve the problem of charity?"

No. It's not their fault. The system of organised charity is such that they must inevitably become as they are after a few months' work. Almost all of the women investigators and other employées of the institutions are recruited from the impoverished middle class. To obtain a position what is commonly called "pull" is absolutely necessary. As a rule these people have never known any want—real privation. At first, when they see poverty in all its ugliness they get excited, run to the office and make a terrible report, advising relief in heartrending sentences. They imagine that their will will immediately be carried out and that their mission is a very high one. But when the Manager calls them into his office and proves to them that they have been lied to and deceived; that the pauper is a habitual liar; that you cannot believe a single word they say; when he tells them that if they do not prove more adroit the next time their position is not suited to them, then they look at the poor with other eyes. He or she is no more a subject for pity, a wreck that has to be pulled ashore. It is bread and butter for herself. If she allows herself to be deceived by an applicant she endangers her own position.

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All the investigators fear poverty, fear it because they know how terrible it is, *that it is a crime*. Not a word of the poor is believed. Her next report will be a tissue of lies and accusations, viz.:

"The family has rich connections from whom they get help. From the grocer, butcher and baker I have learned that the family spends more than is necessary." If the applicant is a widow and young she inserts that neighbours doubt her morality; that she stays out late at night, etc., etc., and she closes her report with the observation that the applicant is unworthy and undeserving of charity. This she does because she has learned that she is not to advise to give, but that she is paid to find out reasons and excuses why help should not be given.

It is true that in the course of the work the investigators find cases where the organisations are deceived, but this makes them so suspicious that if one were to take their word for it help would never be extended to an applicant.

Then, another reason for her stony-heartedness is the continual sight of poverty. After a time she gets so accustomed to it that nothing shocks her. It is like a surgeon in a hospital who becomes so hardened that the amputation of an arm or leg is nothing—a trifle.

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The poor represent so much material. One sews aprons and shirtwaists for a living; she, the investigator, visits the poor. The hangman too makes a living! It's all business. There can be no love in such work. The men and women in charge of it have not chosen it because they want to devote their lives to succouring the suffering widow or orphan. They are not sisters of mercy. They are paid to do the work. They make a living so.

If the investigators were superior beings things would be somewhat different; but superior beings go into business nowadays. It pays better. Some investigators only get thirty to forty dollars per month.

I have known investigators who left their own children at home without food. They trembled lest a mistake cost them their positions. They did all in their power to find out a reason why the applicant should not receive money to buy bread for her children. One might fancy that were they investigating their own cases they would still find reasons.

Think of an investigator moving a consumptive family from the fifth floor to the basement, she who lectured on tuberculosis: "Light and air are the best cure for consumption." This is how she spoke, this is what she believed, but in practice! When a woman has to climb stairs from morning to night, then her only thought is how to make her own work easier; how to make a living easier.

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Yes, but it costs the lives of women and children. And does the owner of mines think of that? And does the manufacturer think of that? And does the milkman, a devout church-goer, who baptises his milk, think of the children he is killing, of the future generations he is crippling? And does the canner think of that when he allows rotten meat to go into his cans? No. They are all making a living and do not believe that animals should be killed for food.

I knew a young lady who got a job as investigator—a nice young, sentimental girl. After a few months' work she was the terror of the poor and the pet of the Manager. She had reduced by half the list in her district. From a hundred applications she investigated not ten got relief. She would visit them day and night to find a reason why they should be cut off. The neighbours for ten blocks around would know that Mrs. So and So had applied to the institution. And when one day I told her she was not fit for such a position because she had no heart, and advised her to get a job at something else, she showed me her right hand. She had lost her fingers in an accident at an embroidery machine and she had to make a living!

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Another young woman, who was engaged to marry a friend of mine and who got the position through me, lost the affection of her fiancé.

"She has entirely changed in the last few months," he told me. "She is suspicious, hard, cold and cynical. Her face has changed, she never laughs, never smiles."

Poor chap! He did not know the cause. I did.

The work, the surroundings, the system of organised charity, unfits them for anything, and

among all the crimes of charity the one that stands out pre-eminently is that it ruins the lives of all the men and women who work in it. Only a God and an angel could remain good. But the gods are in the heavens and the angels are crucified.

THE CHILDREN OF THE POOR

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No district of any big city in the world has such a desolate miserable look as the "charity blocks" in New York. They are grouped a little everywhere. For this, New York is like the body of Job, with sores and wounds all over.

Around all the gas houses near the river, north, south, east and west, take any of the gay streets of the metropolis. Forty-second Street, Thirty-fourth Street, Twenty-third and Fourteenth Streets. With what dirt and misery they start on the west, how they get brighter and gayer towards the middle, on Seventh Avenue, how they reach the climax at Fifth Avenue, and how the Third Avenue elevated in the east and Ninth Avenue elevated in the west cuts off the ugly part of the city, like the butcher who trims around the meat. The cheap tallow for the poor and the centre piece for the rich, and all comes from one and the same animal. Just as the meat, in proportion to its nutrition, costs the poor dearer than the rich, so do the apartments of the poor cost more than the Fifth Avenue houses, taking into consideration the comfort of the latter. As a matter of fact it is well known that Cherry, Henry, Monroe and Hester Street properties are more profitable, proportionately to the money invested, than Fifth Avenue apartments. No vacant house is to be seen around the celebrated "lung blocks." The terrible stench coming from across the river, where the garbage of the city is dumped, has killed the sense of smell of the poor wretches living there. They wonder at you when you keep handkerchief to your nose while passing. It is an ordeal to pass along Avenue A between Twenty-fifth and Thirty-fourth Streets. The poisonous gas combines with the stench of the slaughter house, and the piled up garbage in the river. Still the streets are full of children, playing, and God only knows why the poor have so many children.

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My work brought me into daily contact with the children. "The nutty scribbler," they called me, the Italian boys pronouncing my title with their peculiar accent; the Russian with theirs and the Jewish boys translating it altogether into their idiom. Poor, underfed and oversmart children; ready-witted and half-witted. Child and old man. Buying sour pickles instead of bread when they get a penny, ready to do anything for a puff from a cigarette. Their ideal is not to become a workingman. They know too well where that leads. Kid Herman, Kid Twist and Red Larry are their heroes, and in childish contradiction, the policeman is their idol. How they swarm around a newspaper when there is "anything" in it. An interesting murder case, a robbery, a street shooting, these are the sensations of their lives. When the father comes home drunk they envy him and will soon imitate him. They help the burglars hide, and chase the pickpocket over the roofs, together with the detectives, giving advice in turn to the hunted how to escape and to the policeman how to catch him; rejoicing when the bad one has escaped and booing him along the street when he is handcuffed. And every year their domain extends a little further until it approaches the rich. A block from Riverside drive and two from Fifth Avenue—extending continually, like a cankerous wound.

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One evening I visited a family that was pensioned by the charities. The father had just been discharged from the consumptive hospital as cured and I was instructed to see whether he was well enough to work. A plan was on foot to open a soda water stand for him, to keep him outdoors, lest he again become sick.

They had five children. The oldest, a girl, was twelve years old. It was ten o'clock and I expressed wonder that the children were not in the house. The mother's answer was not straight.

"They are playing, they are visiting neighbours, I sent them away," were her answers to my questions. I sensed a mystery and decided to wait until they came home. I talked with the man and asked him his prospects for the future, to which he hopefully answered that he was sure to get his old place in the clothing factory as presser. I questioned him about his life in the hospital and sought every way to prolong my visit. The mother was very anxious to get rid of me, but I stuck to the job. About half past ten the children came in, all pale and worn-out, hardly saying good-night, but going straight to bed.

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"From where do you all come so late?" I asked.

"From the street," the mother answered and pushed them into the other room. I felt that it was useless to insist, so I retired. The street was deserted. No child's play was going on and the children of the applicant did not appear to be the sort who would stay until the last. I walked up and down the block without meeting a child. At the corner, near the gas house, on Fourteenth Street, I met a policeman and talked the matter over with him.

"The street has turned good these last few weeks. Don't know what's the matter," was his remark.

I did not agree with him and walked up and down the street until past midnight, when I decided to continue my investigation the next morning.

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A postcard advised the office that I would be busy the following morning and could not report. At eight o'clock I was near the house of the consumptive family. The children all went to school. Not to compromise my work I stayed away until noon. The children came for lunch and returned to school. It was early in the spring and a glorious day. I could not help thinking of the beauty of the field and forest on such days, when the green is shooting out from the soil in the gardens, when the plough is carving out slices from mother earth and the birds are singing in the trees. I could not help thinking how life has taken these poor people out of their homes in the little villages of Russia, Poland, Italy and Roumania and has crowded them, nay, herded them together in what is called a tenement row, to sleep there and to work in a sweatshop in the day. How do they feel when they think of their homes, when they see a green leaf, when they hear the song of a bird? When one has colour in his face they say that he still has the "home colour." When they mention a feat of strength or endurance they add: "It was my first year here you know."

At three P. M. I was back at my post. I watched the children come from school. With their many-coloured dresses they looked from far away like a swarm of butterflies, but as they approached they became less gay, less expansive.

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Talk about the influence of home on children! Among a group of children I spied the oldest girl of the consumptive man. She walked more slowly than the others, as though she wanted to retard something that waited for her at home. Finally she took leave of the others and entered the hall. By and bye the other sisters and two brothers came. I waited outside. A quarter of an hour later the oldest girl and the second brother, about nine years old, came out, still chewing the piece of bread they had for tea. They walked hand in hand, and I followed them. They turned the corner and entered a tenement house near Fourteenth Street. I intended to follow them upstairs when I observed many other children of about the same age coming. Some were as young as six and seven, however. Some were biting apples, others, boys of nine to twelve years, throwing away the last bit of the butt of a cigarette, with the regretful gesture of the workingman before the factory door closes on him and the bell rings.

"Where in heaven are you all going?" I asked a group of boys.

"None of your rotten business," was the reply in chorus. I withdrew and watched. One after another they went up the stairs until I had counted nearly a hundred. When I saw no more coming I went up the stairs, the dark, ill-smelling stairs, until I reached the third floor. It was a rear yard house. Dark, dirty, dingy. On the third floor I stopped and listened. A buzzing noise came from one of the apartments, as though a thousand hands were crushing silk paper between the fingers. Soon a door opened. A little girl came out. I did not speak to her. Interested, I entered the apartment without knocking at the door. In a room 10 x 15, were two long tables and on both sides sat the little boys and girls on benches. On the tables were piled up all sorts of candies and chocolates, which the children put in paper boxes that lay near them. So engrossed were they in their work that they hardly lifted an eye to see who had entered. A big burly Italian met me and asked what I wanted.

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"Is Mr. Salvator Razaza living here?" I asked.

"No Razaza. What you want come here. Get out and shut up." And not very gently he pushed me out.

So this was where they all went. So this was what they were doing. Filling boxes with candy when they had no bread to eat. Here was the place where they buried their youth—the children of the poor!

Outside I saw an old man grinding a hand organ, but there were no children to dance around him on the sidewalk. The street was deserted.

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"Rotten business," remarked the old fellow. "No children. Me not know what the matt. All the bambinos morte, sick? Sacre Madonna," the old man shook his head, packed up his organ and thoughtfully went away, carrying his music to other places, where the children are not packing candies in boxes while their stomachs are empty. No, no, old man. The children are not dead. *They* never die. "The children of the poor never die," as Mrs. Barker puts it. They pack candies, but the mystery was only half solved. The rest was easy to get at, late at night, when the children of the consumptive man came home. They had to unburden themselves. All five were working there—piece work, and they were making as much as forty cents a day, the five of them combined. More than a hundred were working in that factory, while many other hundreds of children worked in other factories which had of late started in the neighbourhood. Willow plumes, artificial flowers and packing candies were the chief trades, while the making of cigarettes and labelling of patent medicine bottles and boxes occupied a minor position. On close investigation I found that more than fifty per cent. of the people pensioned by charity had their children at work in these murderous shops.

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Through a ruse I obtained entrance to several of them. It is so terrible, so unbelievable that I keep from describing it, knowing beforehand that you will say "exaggerated." One hundred children in one room, windows and doors tightly closed. So that the attention of people may not be attracted the children must not talk, must not sing. One little gas burner in the middle of the room is all the light there is. The toilet is almost always out of order. The piece work has so sharpened their ambition that their little fingers fly and they do not want to spare the time for

personal necessities. The little girls and boys strong enough to keep back all these hours soon get bladder diseases—while the weaker ones—well, their clothes tell the tale. But the ladies want willow plumes and artificial flowers and Miss So and So has to be given a nice looking box of candy by her beau. The rich men have to get richer and give more money to the charity institutions, and hospitals must be endowed with millions and the sanatoriums for the poor consumptives and the cheap milk mission and the free doctor—all this must be kept up and costs money—and money must be made.

When I reported what I had found out I was told by the Manager not to report it to the Factory Inspectors, because it was so much better that the children should train themselves from early youth to shift for themselves and become self-supporting, and that ultimately they would have to go to work—what was the difference? I was told that I was not telling them anything new, only I should find out who the children were working for and how much they were earning, so that the pension could be reduced accordingly. [Pg 159]

"But they are little tots," I argued.

"Well, they are all older than you think," I was answered, "and idleness is so very dangerous."

"But the places are unsanitary," I further insisted.

"They can't build special factories for them, it's too costly in the first place, and secondly it would make too much noise and they would not be permitted to work."

"They will all get sick—consumptive," I said.

"Well, well, it is not so terrible. They have a remarkable power of resistance, and if they do get sick—we will take care of them. That's what we are here for. Mr. Baer, you are an anarchist."

Thus ended my interview on behalf of the children of the poor. I did something on my own hook.

The result?

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The factories were moved away to another place. They could easily do it. They did not build any special houses for the trade. Later on I learned that one of the biggest concerns in willow plumes did half of their work through outside contractors and that the price was so low that no woman could make a living at it. The head of this concern is one of the biggest philanthropists and contributors to charities. Still he might not know! Just as the young lady does not know from where her Christmas pleasure money comes—and distraction is absolutely needed.

MOTHER AND SON

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There was a boy about fourteen years of age who would daily menace his widowed mother with denouncing her to the "office." He terrorised the poor woman to such an extent that she allowed him to do whatever he wanted. He never went to school, he smoked, he drank, he boxed, he went to all the moving picture shows, and all this money he obtained from his mother on the threat to tell the "office." The great sin the woman had committed was that she had remarried, a young man, and the groom had decamped with two hundred and fifty dollars that she had saved up in the seven or eight years widowhood and beggary. The whole affair was a secret to the institution, as the woman feared her two dollars weekly pension would be discontinued should they learn of the marriage.

I happened to visit the home one morning. The boy was pacing the room, almost naked, a cigarette hanging from the corner of his lower lip, his face enraged, his eyes red, and as he paced the room he cursed the mother, who was standing at the stove preparing the food. And the language he used! I heard all the curses of the Bowery as I stood near the door. [Pg 162]

"I'll fix you up, you old rag—cough up or I'll smash your ivory."

When I knocked at the door he greeted me with "What d'hell d'you want?"

He had his mouth set for another greeting of the same sort when I gently but firmly pushed his insolent face back and entered.

The woman knew me and the boy probably guessed my occupation, for he proceeded to coerce his mother, motioning and making faces, as though to say: "Yes, or I will tell!" The mother ignored his threats so he casually remarked: "Mrs. Carson!"

The woman made a sign that she would yield and the boy dressed in a hurry.

I busied myself with my notebook all the time, just throwing out a question once in a while. When the boy was all dressed up he beckoned to the mother to follow him into the other room. She did so. I heard a suppressed curse and a deep sigh. The boy came out first. As he passed my chair I stood up and seizing his wrists I asked: "Why don't you go to school?"

No answer.

"Why don't you go to work?"

No answer.

"How dare you insult your mother the way you do, you scoundrel?"

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Instead of answering me he turned to his mother.

"You squeaked—ha? That's what you did! You old piece of rot."

Thus spoke a son to his mother. I felt the blood rushing to my head and I struck the blaspheming mouth. He tried to fight back and even took the pose, but I was too much for him. I pinned his arms.

The mother had not moved. If anything she was rather satisfied that the boy got his due. Again the boy twisted around, and looking daggers at his mother he said:

"You'll tell tales? Ha? and let this big stiff hit me? And you'll stay there like a lamp post? Ha! that's what you'll do? I'll croak you, I'll put you right—wait!"

"Do you know," he turned to me, "that—"

"George, George," the mother yelled and covered the boy's mouth with her open palm.

"I know it all," I interrupted. "I know that your mother's name is Mrs. Carson."

The poor mother looked as though she had been struck with an iron bar over the head.

"And now, my boy, give back the money you forced from your mother a while ago." From his pocket the mother took out a dollar and some cents. I compelled the boy to go to school, menacing him with everything I thought would scare him, and obtained from him the promise that he would go the next morning. But when I turned to go, I saw the mother shivering as though in the clutches of fever. She motioned me not to go, then sat down and wept. Of course I knew the reason for her tears. She was afraid her pension would be cut off. She had lied to the institution. She had not told them of her unfortunate remarriage. She was afraid of her son. Why? Because, fearing that the investigator might question her son she had been compelled to lie to the boy and teach him to lie, and he grew up with the knowledge that he could obtain anything he wanted from his mother with the threat of telling the truth. The child grew up a blackmailer. The system of organised charity made him one.

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And how many, how many similar occurrences have led to similar results? How many men in stripes could trace their downfall to the "question room" of the Investigator!

As to this particular boy—he went to school for a few weeks but his street habits corrupted the other children, and he was expelled. For a time he sold newspapers on the streets, then he gradually sank lower and lower and was later on sent to a reformatory to expiate a minor offence and from there he will be discharged a graduated criminal.

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Webster says: "A university is an assemblage of colleges established in any place, with professors for instructing students in the sciences and other branches of learning, and where degrees are conferred. A university is properly a universal school, in which are taught all branches of learning, or the four faculties of theology, medicine, law, and the science and arts."

I know universities where the students are not instructed in the sciences and other branches of learning, and where degrees of a different kind are conferred on the students; a university where other objects than theology, medicine, law and the sciences and arts are taught.

Burglary, blackmailing, safe-blowing, murder and other applied sciences and arts are taught there.

The professors are incomparably superior to the ones in the colleges; they are men with great experience and they impart their knowledge to their pupils without charging fees. They do it for love.

In the underworld the Reformatory is called "the university." And one who knew, one day remarked to me: "If they (meaning the good citizens) had wanted to create a school where crime should be taught they could not have done better than by fixing up a Reformatory. They get a real training there, pass through a sound apprenticeship and are masters of their particular branch when they come out."

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CLIPPING WINGS OF LITTLE BIRDS

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"And where does she go every day?"

"In town."

"Does she stay out late at night?"

"I don't know."

"Do men come often to the house?"

"Sometimes."

"Is she sometimes drunk? I mean, does she use whisky? Is there whisky in the house?"

"Not that I know of."

"Does she smoke cigarettes?"

"No."

"Is she visiting the moving picture houses?"

"No—never."

To whom are these questions put? To the children of the poor. The "she" referred to is the mother, and the child is often not older than eight years, and sometimes younger. And who puts the questions? The investigators, of course.

On the information of a neighbour that Mrs. S. "eats meat every day and goes to the moving pictures," a widow's pension was cut off and she was submitted to the test.

A few days later, when the mattress and broken chairs were on the street the woman was in the office crying, tearing her hair and beating her heart. She begged the Manager, she begged the investigator—"Pity—pity—have pity on me and my children." But they turned a deaf ear. When the poor woman got beyond control the janitor was called to help and he made it short. He put her out.

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For more than an hour she sat outside on the steps. Then suddenly she got up and disappeared. A half hour after she was back again, but not alone. She had brought her three children—a little boy of five and two girls, one seven and the other nine years old. She wanted to go in, but the janitor, acting on the orders given, did not let her pass the door. When she once had put her foot between sill and door he simply beat her off. Her screams and cries could have melted a heart of stone, but not that of a janitor of a charity institution. They are picked men, of a special brand.

I spoke to the investigator and tried to convince her that the test had gone far enough, but she was not satisfied.

"That woman," she said, "is acting—acting her part. I am not going to be taken in. No, she would not fool me."

Then suddenly she ran out and through the open door I saw how she literally tore away the three children from their mother's hands and when the mother wanted to follow her little ones the door was slammed and caught the fingers of the unfortunate woman. She screamed, the children screeched and all the other applicants ran to the door, wailing, crying—but the investigator ordered them all away. Only the janitor finally took pity and brought a wet towel to wrap around the injured hand. However, she was not let in. The investigator dragged the three little ones away to her room.

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I don't know why I was under the impression of seeing a wolf carrying away three little chicks to his den.

She brought them to her room and when she saw me coming she slammed the door and remained alone with them. From outside I heard the children crying and the questioning intonation of their torturer. She changed her tactics every minute. First she was sweet and promising, then loud and menacing, then again persuading, convincing, suddenly threatening, intimidating—a real Scarpia in petticoats.

Meanwhile the mother stood outside, a wet towel on her arm, crying and beating with her head the heavy closed door. It was the hour when the "committee" was going home. An automobile stopped at the door and the Manager majestically descended the broad stone steps, seated himself comfortably on the cushioned seat, buttoned his coat and beckoned to the driver. A few seconds later he was enveloped in a cloud of dust.

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After all, why not speak simply? From where all that money? Even if it is only from the salary, does it not prove that he is getting too much? Isn't that money destined to pay for other things than gasoline, and a liveried chauffeur? Has any one of those that bequeathed a certain amount of money to an institution written in his will that a proportion of the money shall go for gasoline, liveried chauffeurs and high salaries? Of course, a certain amount of money is necessary for expenses, but is there no reason to feel that there is "something rotten in Denmark" when A Little Mothers' Association gives out a report that around eighty per cent. of the total amount of money was spent on office work, salaries and investigators and only twenty per cent. went to the poor? The reason they give is that they prefer to spend fifty dollars on investigating before giving five dollars, for fear of giving to the undeserving, and that the large amount of money spent on salaries, etc., shows the good and thorough work of the institution. Then why not be consistent and spend the whole amount the same way? It will show still better work, greater efficiency. Why not put up a sign: "This institution is founded with the object not to give charity," or call it "The Society to Prevent Pauperisation of the Poor." But this does not pay. No fool will give money for such a purpose. I foresee a day when the poor will protest that their names and qualifications should not be used to obtain money under false pretences—a day when the poor will elect from

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whom they want to receive charity.

But to come back to the wolf. After a quarter of an hour another young woman, usually at work at the desk, quit her chair and went into the room. She was all excited, as one might be before the curtain rises on the scene when the villain is killed. She moved around on her chair, bit her nails, squeezed her fingers, broke nibs—the wolf smelling a rabbit. She at last could not resist temptation, so she entered the room. And then I heard both their voices. Another investigator appeared. She was the oldest in the place, and reputed to be a marvel. (She afterwards obtained a position in the Juvenile Court—"the right place for the right woman.")

"What's the matter in there?" she asked the office boy.

"Clipping wings of little birds," he answered laconically.

It was the first time I had ever heard a sentence which so well characterised the work.

The old "maman" hardly had patience to throw off her coat when she rushed into the fray. After a short lull during which the three conferred probably, the old cove took charge of one of the little ones, and went into another room. [Pg 172]

The whole thing lasted more than an hour and was given up as unsuccessful. The children were thrust out to the mother. She was ordered to come to-morrow.

The three women seated themselves together and the younger one, thinking of the great exploits of the police detectives, Sherlock Holmes stories, remarked:

"A regular third degree."

The janitor, very interested in charity affairs, asked: "Did you sweat them?"

The old "maman" thought deeply for a few moments then she exclaimed with feeling:

"Come to think of it, they refused my candy! Isn't that a sign that they had enough of it, that they get candy every day?"

"Of course," joined the two, "it certainly is so—children to refuse candy! Who ever heard of it?"

"When are they coming to-morrow?"

"In the morning."

"Well, I will try to help you in this affair. I don't think they are deserving."

As she went to write her report she kept on saying: [Pg 173]

"A nice bunch—a nice bunch."

Presently the office boy approached, chewing gum.

"Confessed, condemned to the electric chair?" he asked.

THE ORPHAN HOME

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I was ushered into the private room of the superintendent of the Orphan Home. After a few moments' introductory talk he brought me down to the kitchen—a large, spacious room with all the modern cooking paraphernalia. The cook presided over the stove, on which were a dozen pots. Three pale little girls were peeling potatoes.

From there we went to the dressmaking room, where half a dozen girls under the supervision of an expert were making dresses, shirts, sheets and all the other linen of the house. Though it was a beautiful spring day they had to use gas light, the room was so dark. The superintendent noticing my gaze fixed on the burning light, explained:

"It is not too dark here, but you can't make them understand that artificial light is bad for the eyes. It's a pity to waste money on gas, but you can't do everything just right."

From the dressmaking room he led me to the dining room, which was a very large, light room, with one big white marble table in the centre. Little girls were busy setting the table for the noon meal. Soon the bell rang and a hundred pair of tripping feet followed the call to lunch. In a few moments they were all sitting around the table. A big cauldron of soup was brought and the bowls filled with the steaming food. A hundred little mouths munched and chattered and whispered, the older girls supervising the younger ones, the stronger ones often getting the slice of bread belonging to the weaker. [Pg 175]

One of the "old ones" approached the superintendent and told him: "Clara Morris does not eat."

"Why?" he asked.

"She cries, sir," the girl answered.

"Bring her to my office," he ordered.

Then he turned to me and explained: "The new ones don't assimilate readily. There is especial difficulty in the matter of food. Their taste has been spoiled with spicy food and they can't eat the simple, wholesome food we give them here. The first few days they don't eat at all, but when they get good and hungry they fall to it like the rest. And they eat—oh! they eat. If you could see the bills for food for a month you would gasp. A fortune is spent. The fruit bill alone is above three hundred dollars a month. They get all the fruits of the season, but they would prefer pickles and sour tomatoes. I tell you for some of them it's lucky their parents died. I shudder to think what would have become of them." As he was speaking the office girl called him to the telephone. I went straight to the child who refused to eat and asked her why she refused the food. It was the child of an applicant and she knew me.

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"I can't eat it—it tastes bad. See for yourself."

I took a spoonful of the supposed lentil soup and tasted. It smelt and tasted like dishwater. Of lentils it had only the colour and the name. Then I tasted the meat and the pudding, and understood why they had to be hungry for a few days before they could touch it. I looked at the faces of the children. All ghastly pale, with bent shoulders and fallen-in chests and toothpick legs—only the eyes were living, the feverish, longing eyes of the people of woe.

The children ate the bread, some chewed a bone, alternating with a bite from a quarter of an apple, the fruit of the season, and as an extra treat, because I was there, two dates were given to each. Once in a while a little tragedy would happen. A big one would take away a slice of bread from a small one, and the protests of the robbed were stilled with threats and pinches.

"When is your happiest time here?" I asked one of the girls.

"Every six weeks," she answered.

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"Why so?"

"Because then I am in the kitchen for two days and can eat as much as I want."

Soon the superintendent came again, and as he insisted on my visiting the classes while at work he invited me to lunch with his family. I was introduced to the lady of the house—who in turn introduced me to their daughter, a young Miss of twenty, with round, healthy body and rosy cheeks and stupid eyes. Mr. Marcel talked all the time, explaining to me how ungrateful the children of the poor are. I was seated directly opposite him at table and had an opportunity of studying him at close range. For the first time I remarked his gluttonous lips and round, protruding belly. He followed every plate with his eyes and ceremoniously pushed his sleeves back before he carved, as though officiating at a holy rite. The more he ate the more he wanted, and seeing such a luncheon and the fruit at the table I quite believed that "The fruit bill alone was three hundred dollars a month."

I turned to the girl and asked:

"How do you like living here?"

"It's nice."

"She is practically born here," the mother explained.

"Then you went to school here," I asked.

"Oh, no—no—" all three, father, mother and daughter protested in chorus. "We would not place our child with *them*," the mother said indignantly, while the father, who was so shocked that he stopped eating his pudding, said:

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"One is willing to sacrifice his own life, but one has no right to do so with one's child."

After luncheon Mr. Marcel delivered himself of the following lecture.

"That's the big mistake of the people outside. They don't seem to realise that in an orphan home you have the scum of the population. The very fact that their parents died young and poor is a proof of the bad root they grow from. Most of the time the father or mother or both have been drunkards, sick and idle. Idleness is a disease and an hereditary one. Why are they poor? because they are degenerates. A healthy man is never poor. Why are they sick? Because they are careless and dirty. Why do they die young if it is not because they are degenerates and careless and dirty? We get their children. They all have bad habits, bad characters, are insolent and indolent, and they all long for the street, the free street. This desire for the free street is terrible. We have here a splendid garden—have a look through the window, sir—a splendid garden is it not? It's my greatest pleasure! They want the gutter. We have a tremendous work to do, and I am happy to be partially successful. We break them of their evil habits, curb their insolence and teach them order and submission, order and submission, order and submission," he repeated.

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The heavy meal soon told on the gentleman and his speech lost its clarity and his tongue stuck in his mouth. He was soon dozing in his chair and I was saved from the awkward position by Mrs. Marcel who gave me the freedom of the place, while explaining that Mr. Marcel was working very hard and was always tired at that hour.

I went down to the garden. There wasn't a child there. One of the teachers sat on a bench reading a paper.

"Excuse me, madame, but why don't the children use the garden?"

"They are not allowed, sir."

I soon saw them pass out from the refectory to the classroom, like little mourners coming from the cemetery where their parents were buried. There are one hundred children, all girls, between the ages of seven and fourteen. *In five hours' time I did not hear one laugh, did not see one smile.* All have but one hope. To reach the age of fourteen and then be placed. It matters not where nor to what work! The main thing is to get out of the "box" as the children call it. But only six out of ten reach the age of fourteen. The hospital is the anteroom of the grave.

When I spoke of the great proportion of sick among the children and of the pallor of all, the superintendent explained: [Pg 180]

"You must not forget that these are not normal children. They are the offspring of degenerates—of the poor."

In all the world, in all the charitable institutions, poverty is a crime. Thus are the children, the orphans, treated like little would-be criminals and every move is regarded with suspicion. Not half of the money given for their food is spent on food and not a half that is given for their clothing is spent for them. The whole institution is a shame and the man who thought he was performing a good deed when he left a bequest to shelter the children of the poor is cursed instead of being blessed.

And the devil sits on the stove and says: "This is the best place that man ever built for me."

This was a model Orphan Home. I have since visited other places and found everywhere the same situation, with little variations. The conditions in a Paris house are no better than those in Chicago, and the children are not more unhappy in Montreal than in Berlin. The children of the poor, the orphans, are everywhere little criminals that Mr. Levy, Monsieur Albert, Mr. Marcel or Herr Grun has to "tame and teach submission." The wish of all the children is to get rid in some way of the "box." (This word is used by all the orphans all over the world to designate their home. It is characteristic and shows how suffering is international and conveys to all the same designation of a certain evil.) The girls by getting married or becoming servants. Oh! They don't intend to stay married to the man the institution procures for them. Generally it is an old widower who applies for one, to "make happy a poor orphan." She will not stay with him and her vow is worth nothing—is a subterfuge to escape. And if she goes as a servant it is also only to get out into the world where she will soon fall a victim to the first snare, on account of her inexperience and broken spirit, and her fear of returning to the "box." [Pg 181]

Never has the orphan house been described as well as Marguerite Audoux has done it in her "Marie Claire." There, too, you see what the children miss—bread and love—and that what they most want is freedom. The day one of the girls goes away all the others are sad—sad to live between those four walls. The friendship of the cook is one's greatest asset. One can get an extra piece of meat or an apple or a slice of bread. All the while tens of thousands of dollars are given, gardens are made where the children must not enter and food is prepared which the children do not eat. Holidays are celebrated and the children are tortured to learn some platitude which they must recite to please the ladies and gentlemen who come to honour the house with their presence. But down in their souls the children hate the whole game. They are not fooled—they know. And one girl confided to me the following: [Pg 182]

"There are busts in clay and marble and paintings of all that have started and contributed to this institution. In the centre hall is a white stone plate with the names engraved in gold. Well, every morning I walk up to each and every one and tell him my opinion of his deed. I can hardly keep my fist back from the bust of the one who founded this 'box.' And to the plate, that plate with names engraved in gold—morning and night I say, 'Damn you all.' It's my prayer."

This voices the feeling of all the children.

My visit to the Orphan Asylum was due to the following fact.

Mrs. D., a widow, had two children, two girls, one seven and one ten. When her husband died she placed both children in the Orphan Home. After a few months the younger one died there and Mrs. D. took the other one home. All the charitable institutions did their utmost to get the child back to the institution, but in vain. The mother maintained that the death of her child was due to the negligence of the people in charge there. She said this openly, although she needed assistance. The child, too, would not return, and whenever the name of the institution was mentioned would cling to the mother's apron. The office was afraid that the reputation of the institution would be damaged and so they used every effort to combat the mother's decision. The whole officialdom was very nice and gentle to the widow. Help was freely given, and they even spoke of buying her a candy store, on condition that she free herself of the child. When this course did not produce the desired effect the Manager explained to her that the child would stand in the way of her remarriage, that she was young and had a right to live, etc., etc. When he wanted, the silken gentleman knew how to use unctuous language. But the mother instinct was stronger than the desire for money, for happiness—stronger than hunger. [Pg 183]

Finally supplies were cut off. It was expected that hunger, "King Hunger," would settle

everything. And "King Hunger" did settle it. Two months later two lines in a newspaper spoke about his success. She was found dead with her child lying near her. The gas-jet was open and the coroner is investigating whether it was an accident or suicide.

I give only the outlines of this miserable affair. It did not go as smoothly as it appears on paper. The visits of the mother, the change of tactics, the cries of the child whenever some one approached her. The horror of it all! And the talk of the people at the office. From the Manager to the janitor—cold-blooded murderers. And the threats and taunts and insults. And to-day, when I look back at it all, I think of my visit to this and all the other orphan houses, and I am of the opinion that this mother did not do a bad thing. She had more courage than many others. If they all knew, as this mother did, and if they all were as sincere and truthful to their children, Death would always be preferable to the wreck of what remains. Then, and only then, would the eyes of the world be opened. Then would everything be clear—clear—that no man could with one hand ruin health and spirit, through factory and workshop and adulterated food, dark and dirty tenement houses and Wall Street speculation, and with another hand give donations of a few dollars to palliate the evil he had created.

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Or is this perhaps a new interpretation of Christ's words: "Let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth"?

WHY THEY GIVE

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Among the chief contributors to a charitable institution are two gentlemen manufacturers. One a Mr. W., the other a Mr. M. D.

In the clothing factory of Mr. W. about four hundred workers, men, women and children, are employed. There the lowest wages are paid and a task system, combined with subcontracting and piece work, compels the workers to start at five in the morning, and if you pass at midnight you will still see the lights burning and hear the heavy rolling of the machines.

In the Summer of 1913 the manufacturer took a trip to Europe, and when he returned in September he found a considerable financial depression. His men were employed only part of the time; many were discharged altogether. The average pay of the men was three dollars to four dollars per week, the women and girls one dollar and one dollar and fifty cents. The Jewish holy days approached and as all the workingmen, as well as their employers, were Jews, they were naturally very much worried how the holy days were to be kept. Two weeks before the Day of Atonement Mr. W. called into his office a few of his men and delivered himself of the following:

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"Boys, the holy days are coming. I am a Jew, a good Jew, and thought that you all must be very anxious to get some more money in your pay envelopes so that you may buy clothes for your women and children, and I have decided to see that you all have plenty of work during the following weeks."

The men cheered Mr. W.

"But," he continued, "on one condition, by reducing your prices fifteen per cent. Times are hard. I have had enormous expenses. The holy days are approaching. I have no doubt that all of you are good Jews and would not want to shame your faith, so I hope that all is agreeable to you and you can start to-morrow under the new condition."

Naturally the men refused and assembled in the halls of their union. The leaders of that organisation could not believe that Mr. W. had said what the men reported, though they knew the gentleman very well, and they went to the manufacturer to get an explanation. I was then the Secretary of a Tailor's Union. The result of the conference was that Mr. W. repeated what he had said to his men and added that he saw that this was the best opportunity to cut wages.

"They are all Jews—they will need money for the holy days, so they have to submit. It's my best chance."

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It so happened that the men kept well together and did not return to work. They struck. Winter set in very early that cursed year, but the men and women stood hunger and cold rather than submit to such conditions. Weeks and weeks passed and Mr. W. made no effort to settle with his men. We knew he had plenty of work. We knew he was sending work to be done in the country places at ridiculously low prices. Still we knew that there was work he could not send out. None of the men returned to work; none of the other tailors worked there. We watched, and one day we got hold of a newly arrived immigrant with a letter in his hand.

"Where are you going?" one of the pickets asked him, and innocently the man showed his letter. A letter from the charity organisation to the manufacturer in which he was told that the man had just come over, "and will, let us hope, prove to be of the right kind."

The original is in the safe of Local 209 of the United Garment Workers of America.

And then we learned that daily the institution sent men to break the strike, to help the manufacturer who contributed a certain sum yearly to charity because it costs less to do this than to use a strike-breakers' agency. With the help of these institutions the men were beaten. For

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thirty weeks through the cruel winter of 1913 they remained on strike. When the temperature descended to thirty below zero men, women and children stood naked and hungry. Illness killed them by the dozen. Some of the young girls went on the streets, and the charity institution sent the incoming and ignorant immigrants to the manufacturer, who worked them SIXTEEN hours a day for five dollars or six dollars a week.

"Men, what are you doing?" I asked the managers of the institution. "You are supposed to *help the poor*, the suffering, and not the manufacturers."

"Yes," I was answered, "but this institution exists through the bounty of the *rich* and they are the first to be considered."

"Then this is a strike-breaking agency?"

"Call it what you will."

Then we went to the manufacturer.

"Have you no heart? You know that the cost of living is going up. How can you reduce wages?"

The answer was: "First I am a business man, and as such I must try to reduce the cost of production. I saw my opportunity. As to the high cost of living, I am convinced that the chief reason for this is the high cost of production, and in reducing the wages of the men I lower the cost of production." Of course with such brutes discussion is useless. But his parting words are interesting:

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"Believe me, sir, I suffer to see my men in misery. You know I am a heavy contributor to charity."

It was too much for me.

One more point in regard to the outcome of the strike. A certain influential man of the city succeeded in bringing about a settlement through arbitration. The workers selected two men, the manufacturer another two and the editor of a Jewish newspaper presided. Mr. W. as well as the workers agreed to submit to whatever the arbitration committee should decide. On the third day a settlement was reached and the men sent back to work, but when they arrived at the shops hired toughs and detectives cruelly assaulted the starved tailors. Many were carried to hospitals and others were arrested. The manufacturer himself denied that he had ever agreed to submit to an arbitration committee, though he had given his signature to a typewritten agreement.

Mr. M. D., the other gentleman manufacturer mentioned, is one of the richest men in the country. He is a cigar manufacturer. For a long time he was the president of a charitable organisation and is a heavy contributor to every form of charity.

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In the teeth of winter, 1914, he reduced the wages of his workingmen twenty-five per cent. None of the English papers said a word, not a word in the Jewish one, because the gentleman took the precaution to be a shareholder in the publication. The result? A few more dead; a few more on the street; a few more in the hospital; a few more dollars to charity.

And that splendid gentleman, Mr. G., who put eight dollars in Amy's pay envelope, a girl seventeen years old, and when Amy returned the money, saying that only three dollars and sixty cents was due her he said: "Well, well, for the rest of the money I want a kiss," and he took it, and Amy is on the street now.

And Mr. G.? Ye poor of the land don't forget him in your daily prayers. He helps the widow and the orphan.

In a controversy about white slavery I maintained that the chief reason was the low wages paid to the girls, and this gentleman had the audacity to state publicly that the real reason was the *high wage* (\$3) paid to them; that they get used to luxury. A week after his statement a girl found in a house of ill fame and brought before the Judge frankly stated that she could not live on \$3 per week and that this was the chief reason for her downfall. Did Mr. G. not himself pay \$4.40 (the difference between \$3.60 and \$8.00) for a kiss? But that's why they give money to charities. To be shielded, to be helped in case of a strike, to procure a talisman.

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THE KITCHEN

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There was no work to be had anywhere in the winter of 1913-14. The C. P. R. and G. T. R. had discharged men by the hundreds. Factories had shut down, stores closed. Hundreds, nay, thousands, were starving. What had happened? A financial depression! Over-valuation, speculation and other explanations could not still the hunger of the poor and their families. The cost of living and rent went up, and nature seemed to help the rich. What a winter!

Some good-hearted men started a campaign for a kitchen where the hungry could get a complete meal for 5 cents. No sooner was the campaign started and the necessary fund covered, the kitchen well started, when hundreds of men and women went there to satisfy their hunger. Naturally enough, among the chief contributors were the same Mr. W. and Mr. M. D. as well as other manufacturers. My suspicions were aroused. I found there men, newly arrived immigrants,

that an Immigrants' Aid Society had sent to work at certain places. They naturally displaced other better paid men, and ridiculously low wages were paid.

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"And how do you live on two or three dollars per week?" I asked.

"Oh, I don't spend it all," I was answered. "I send a portion of my wages home to my wife and children to Russia," said one.

"How do you live, then?"

"We eat at the Folks' Kitchen," was the answer.

And there and then I found that nine men out of every ten eating there were employed by one of the other of the manufacturers who contributed to the fund of the kitchen. Any wonder the project immediately materialised? And not only have they given money but the rich send their wives and daughters to serve the poor.

In investigating the cases of those that applied for clothes for their children, the charities eliminated those whose fathers or mothers were on strike at the factories of W. or M. D. —"Fortunate he who can know the causes of things."

I took this kitchen as a sample. Those in other cities, cosmopolitan centres, are the same. Take the Baron de Rothschild kitchen in Paris. Aside from the fact that the food given there is rotten, that the potatoes served are alcoholised, the bread green with mould and the meat unspeakably odorous, aside from all this, a swarm of little sweatshop keepers are continually around the kitchen where they engage cheap labour.

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Cheap! Ye gods. I have tried it myself. They paid me 20 cents a day for fourteen hours' work in an umbrella and cane factory. I worked there a full week and was not the only one. Next to my bench, in front and across, all over, newly arrived men and boys were polishing the sticks, rubbing them so hard that the hands bled. A brother of the manufacturer was watching and driving.

"Come on, come on."

Then in the evening they all ran to the kitchen to get their meal. When they found out I was not green, I was immediately discharged. They wanted only ignorant men, newly arrived men.

Down in the painting room they employed girls. It was more a house of prostitution than a working room. The poor ignorant girls, harvested from the kitchen, were debauched while they painted canes and polished handles.

So many of these sweatshops grew around the kitchen that rent rose in the neighbourhood. Still a bookbinding concern found it convenient to abandon a lease of years and move the whole factory to where it was nearer the blessed spot. More than half of the men working around never received more than one dollar per day and when they went on strike it was an easy matter to fill their places with the people of the dung hill.

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In my presence a prospective manufacturer, discussing the merits of different localities for his plant, was willing to pay \$80 per month more for one site than the other because it was in the neighbourhood of the kitchen. He would have cheaper labour. He did underbid all the other contractors and prospered and is an influential member of organised charity to-day.

The small manufacturer advises his men where to get cheap meals. At the kitchen. Cheap kitchens for the poor? Cheap kitchens are *for the rich*. Kitchens! A place where the spiders spread their web to catch the hungry flies—to suck their blood.

CHOCOLATE

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Investigating in Paris (France) the conditions of charity institutions I was struck by one particularly funny custom which prevailed in one of them. After the applicant had been tortured and questioned until he would prefer death to a renewal of the ordeal he was given as many packages of chocolates as he had children, chocolate of the best kind, also a certain amount of meat and bread tickets. On the back of each ticket was written the stores where he could exchange it for meat or bread.

One of the investigators, having told me that "they" sold these tickets, especially the meat tickets, I decided to find out the reason for this. I stationed myself in a butcher's shop around the Place de la Bastille, whose name and address was on the back of a ticket. Until 10 A. M. I had not seen a single ticket coming and I was already drawing certain conclusions when I saw a woman coming in. She laid down on the table five francs' worth of tickets and got two francs in exchange. Then another and another one came and all received forty per cent. of the value. Why?

The next day I obtained a few tickets myself, and going into another butcher shop whose address was also marked on the back of the ticket I ordered four pounds of meat. Politely the man served me, and when he had tied up the parcel nicely, I tendered him the tickets. The man got red with rage and brusquely snatched the parcel, put his meat back on the nails, then, still without

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speaking a word, only looking daggers at me, he proceeded to scrape together all the spoiled pieces and bones he could find. This he weighed, and wrapping it up in a piece of dirty paper he handed it to me with the remark: "That's good enough for you."

"But, sir," I said, "you get paid for meat and not for scraps and bones."

"Clear out, clear out, you pauper," he yelled. "What impudence—what impudence." And to a new customer who had just come in he explained, "These paupers are getting impossible to deal with."

He pushed me out and I had to get rid of my parcel at the gutter. The odour of it was sickening. But then I understood why they were exchanging tickets for forty per cent. of the face value. With the money thus obtained they could get a piece of meat elsewhere—a piece of meat that was eatable.

These tickets are paid to the butcher less ten per cent. every first of the month. Why are tickets given instead of money for meat, for bread? There must be a reason. There must be some one interested. They are quite abundantly given. Very little ready cash. Blankets, shoes, aprons, meat tickets, bread tickets. Then think of the little consideration shown the feelings of the poor. Why advertise him as a pauper everywhere, at the butcher's and baker's?

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As to the chocolate, I learned that a certain rich lady had bequeathed a certain amount of money specially for this purpose, namely, that chocolate of a certain brand should be given to the children of the poor. The good old lady must have loved sweetmeats herself very much and she evidently thought that there was no greater misfortune than to miss the sweet bite. Bless her poor soul!

OUT OF THEIR CLUTCHES

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During the Lawrence strike, in the winter of 1911-12, the striking weavers deemed it proper to send away their children to comrades in other places. The men and women understood that the children should be kept away from the carnage then going on.

Arrangements were soon completed and the children sent away to New York in charge of a few reliable people. But on the second transport the charities took a hand in the proceedings and compelled the Mayor and the Sheriff to stop the exodus. The pretext was that the children were being taken away from their mothers, to whom they belonged, and who should take care of them. To intimidate the workers a few of the parents were arrested and kept under lock and key "to show an example."

No human being could forget the spectacle when the poor little ones arrived. Pale, haggard, starved, cold, naked, with shoes torn, bareheaded, they passed along Fifth Avenue. The ladies and gentlemen lined themselves on the edge of the sidewalk. A woman kept a pet dog in her arms and when she saw a little girl shivering she cuddled the animal to her body.

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Could any one forget the first meal the children had. It looked as though they would eat up the spoons and forks. They were afterwards distributed to those who applied for them, to keep them until the strike was over.

It looks very reasonable, does it not? Not to organised charity. They, who insult and torture, got busy and investigated and reported to the Gerry Society. Got the papers busy on the subject and made life miserable for every one who had a Lawrence child. Were they afraid that the workers had wakened up to their own misery? Were they afraid organised charity was going out of business? Were they afraid to lose the fat positions, or was it simply the mania for investigating? Simply the desire to augment the quantity of records? The most pressing local cases were put aside. Everybody was employed getting the children of Lawrence into the clutches of organised charity. They met with very little success, but to me, who knew them thoroughly, their cant of "protect the children," was disgusting.

One of the boys was found alone in a working-man's home. The investigator got busy with so many questions and insinuations (he was Italian and the people keeping him were Jews) that the poor boy ran away, fearing his life was in danger. The Jews needed his blood! He wandered aimlessly on the street. A policeman noticed him, brought him to the station, the reporters got a story:

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"The child ran away because he was ill treated." He was ill treated by the investigator who poisoned his soul. They wanted the children of the Lawrence strikers in their clutches, in the clutches of charity. Thank God, they were saved.

"THE HOME"

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The husband dead and she left with four small children, the woman had to apply to charity. An investigator was sent and she found the family on the verge of starvation. As she was speaking to

the applicant an old man, with grey beard and bent shoulders, came in.

"Who is he?"

"My father," the widow answered.

Further questions brought out the fact that the old man had lived in his daughter's house since his wife died; that he was too weak and old to earn his living and consequently fed on his daughter's fare. The investigator insinuated that the old man would have to be placed in a "Home." The widow cried and vowed that she would never part with her father, and the children surrounded their grandfather as though he was in actual danger of his life. The result was to be foreseen. A week's hunger brought the widow to the office, where she agreed to part with her father, so that her children might live.

The old man took no active part in the controversy concerning his future. Apathetic, he would sit near the open window and read the Psalms. He said no word when his daughter announced to him what the outcome was. A few minutes later he asked: "When am I to go?" Then he packed his belongings, the "Tefilin" prayer books, and was ready.

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Thus are the people of woe ready to wander. He has been in many lands and many a time he has had to leave his abode, go from east to west, north to south.

That very night he slept in the "Home."

Home! the most horrible word for the poor. Home! The whole world calls home the place where one lives. For the poor, the old ones who cannot work any longer, "the Home" is the place where they die. It's the place that stamps them, brands them as eternal paupers. It's the crowning glory of a life of work, manual work. I know you will say: "What else could we do with the poor, incapable of earning their living?" But now come with me down to a few "homes." Don't become ecstatic over the beauty of the lawn in front of the house, nor admire the cleanliness of the kitchen. Come down to look at the men. Do you see this old man there? The one with flowing white beard and bushy eyebrows? That old Jew has made chairs and tables all his life, has made your chair, too, and his neighbour there—the one with trembling hands—he has worked on coats and overcoats, enough for thousands. Look at his hands now. They tremble. Look at your coat. The seam is straight, you want a straight seam. He is here now, in a Home. Look at them all. They have worked all their lives long.

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"Come here, old man. What is your trade?"

"A furrier."

"Old man, what is your trade?"

"A tinsmith."

"And yours? and yours? and yours?"

"Tailor, dressmaker, machinist"—every trade is represented.

The veterans of industry. The temple of Invalids.

The widow's father lived there only two months. I saw him buried in the cold ground. An old man from the Home stood near the grave.

"I wish to be buried right here," he said.

"Why?"

"I got used to him—we were neighbours. His bed was next to mine."

"What was the matter with the old Baruch?" I asked.

"The servants did not like him," he answered.

"Was he ill? I mean old Baruch."

"No, the servants did not like him."

"But that's no reason for a man to die!"

The old man looked at me from under his bushy eyebrows. His look said plainly: "You stupid ass." Then he turned away from me and mingled with the other people. He avoided me when I approached him.

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On the next day I visited the Home again. It was meal time. They all sat around a big table, much like the one I had seen at the orphanage. In the orphanage are fatherless children, in the Homes childless fathers. They sat around the table and tried to chew what was on their plates. Their toothless mouths worked in vain. When the superintendent remarked to me that most of them have stomach ailments and I suggested that a dentist examine their teeth the lady could not stifle her laughter. She was herself a woman of sixty and her mouth was in perfect condition—it was the dentist's work of course.

After the meal was over I tried very hard to get some of the old men to talk. They had nothing to say—this was the answer I got from a few.

"Are you satisfied here?" I asked, to which one fine looking old fellow replied:

"It all depends what one expects, you know. In the Talmud is a story how a man, once very rich, was not satisfied with a supper that three poor men together would have been satisfied about."

I humoured the old fellow and got him to walk with me about the grounds. When out of hearing of the others he told me how the attendants beat every one of them for the slightest infraction of the rules of the house. [Pg 206]

"Why don't you complain to the superintendent?" I suggested.

"The ones that do so shorten their lives."

"You mean?"

"Don't ask any further." A man understands closed lips.

In a rolling chair, at the further end of the garden, sat a paralysed old man.

"How are you feeling, Uncle?" I greeted him.

"Fine, fine," he answered. "I am all right, now."

"He is a lucky dog," remarked my companion, the old man of the Talmud story. "He is paralysed all over."

"Do you call that lucky?—man, it's the greatest misfortune."

"Not in a Home," he answered. "The paralysed are like the dead—they don't feel when they are hurt." Once his tongue was loosened the old man went on. "There is an attendant here, a brute. When he gets mad he runs around to find fault with some one, to hit him. Then we all get out of his way. This fellow here, he has a bad stomach. He would always be the scapegoat. My, how he would suffer. Only his legs got paralysed at first and he had to be turned over in his bed. When that drunkard would get through with him the poor fellow's body was black and blue from pinches and punches. Now he does not feel anything. He punches him and hits and pinches and gets mad to see that the fellow does not feel pain at all." [Pg 207]

"Is that true?" I turned to the old man in the rolling chair.

"You bet it's true, and I have my revenge now, to see him get wild. 'Hullo, Harry! Why don't you pinch me a bit. Come on, Harry, have a pinch,' and he gets mad—like a savage."

I see you shake your head. Fiction! Fiction! Then read the letter sent by a young man and a young woman who worked at a "Home" in New York. The letter was printed in "Our Health" of January, 1913. The Institution did not even offer an excuse. Deny, it could not.

"The patients are mistreated, beaten, kicked, insulted," runs the letter. It has two signatures, the man's and the woman's. If this be not true, why did not the Montefiore Home sue the calumniators? But it is true. They keep quiet. They are afraid of revelations. Some old man or old woman might take his last days into his own hands and come out with the truth.

Another old man was punished by the attendant with two days' fast. He sat at the table but was forbidden to eat. The cause of the punishment was that the old man had soiled the tablecloth. [Pg 208]

When visitors come the lawn is shown, the clean kitchen, the beautiful dining room, the spacious rooms. Nothing of the inhuman treatment to which the inmates are subject comes to light. The gross insults: "Beggard, schnorrer, pauper, liar," are not heard then.

One "Home" is under the same roof with an orphan house. Upstairs the children, downstairs the old people, as though it were a prophecy: "Here you start, there you finish."

The callousness of this shows the sentiment of the people supporting the institutions. An old woman, while peeling potatoes, remarked: "All they miss is a dressmaking shop between the floors and a cemetery in the yard and their whole life would stretch before them."

"BISMARCK"

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Amongst the people in the Home were two chums of olden days. Moise Hertz and "Bismarck." They knew one another from childhood, were born in the same village in Russia, had gone to the same school (cheder) and were both, later on, with their wives and children, driven from home. Once across the border they drifted apart. Moise Hertz with his family went to Germany and "Bismarck" with his wife and children went to England. Both men were tailors. Moise Hertz's two sons returned to Russia during the revolution. One was hanged; the other is in Sachalin (Siberia). His wife died in New York.

"Bismarck's" son is in Denver, trying to cure himself of tuberculosis. His daughter is blind. His wife is in a Home for women.

The two men had not met for fifteen years, though they both lived in New York a good deal of this time. (When they told one another the stories of their lives they found out that they even worked

for a time in the same shop, on different floors.) Then one day, as Moise Hertz filled his pipe he felt some one looking at him intently. The years are not so kind to the poor as to the rich, especially to poor Jews, but Moise Hertz's eyes were keen and the two old chums embraced and called one another by their first names. "Moise—Abe!" In their joy they even blessed the place where they met. Moise Hertz's loneliness was over. He had somebody to talk to of his younger days. They told one another their misfortunes. All hope for a better to-morrow was gone. They only had the past—a rich past, rich in suffering. Once a week Bassie, Bismarck's wife, would come to visit her husband. The trio would then sit together and figure out how their old friends' children were getting along. "He was born during the second cholera." "No, during the Ritual blood accusation of 'Thisza Esler.'" "No, that's impossible!" Bassie would explain. "My Baruch was three years old then and she married during the Pogrom in Kiev." They would quarrel on such subjects and their parting words would still contain an assurance from Bassie that she knew the right year of Leah's birth.

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So passed a full year. The insults of the servants bothered them little. Then one morning Abe Schmenovitz (at that time he was not nicknamed Bismarck) complained to his friend that his arms pained him. Moise led his friend to the doctor's room. The man of science had a look and prescribed something. In spite of the medicine the old man's arms became paralysed. From that day on he was attended to by his chum. Moise Hertz would dress and wash him and at meal times he would feed the old cripple like a mother does her baby. Moise never ate before his friend was through with his meal. When the old fellow complained about his lost arms his chum consoled him:

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"What's the difference how one does, whether with usable arms or not? I have arms for you—better tell me how you got on in London—a big town?" So he would make his friend forget the sorrows of his actual state by forcing him to recall other sufferings.

For two days Moise Hertz was too ill to attend to his friend. When mealtime arrived the cripple sat before his plate and looked at the food—there was no one to help him. He was very hungry. He dared not ask the attendant to help him, so he bent his head and got hold of a piece of meat with his mouth and while he tried to eat it fell out of his toothless mouth several times. He had to get it again—shook his head and reached further—bespattered himself, his face was coloured with the sauce from the plate. The other inmates howled and cursed. But the attendant called the whole servanthood to see the show, and they all laughed and laughed.

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The institution had a dog called "Bismarck," and Abe Schmenovitz got this nickname from the chambermaid that day. It stuck to him to his last day. For several days the attendants forbade Moise Hertz to feed his friend. They wanted to see the show—a man eating like a dog. The old fellow forgot his real name in the course of time.

When he died the servant announced his death to the superintendent in the following way:

"Bismarck died."

"The dog?" The gentleman sprang from his chair.

"No, the man—sir."

TWENTY-ONE CENTS AND A QUARTER

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An old couple who had once seen better days and whose only son died of caisson disease after working two months on the laying of the pillars which support the Williamsburg Bridge between New York City and Brooklyn, was supported by organised charity. Rent, coal and three dollars a week for food. For two years they lived on this scant pension, when all at once they were told to give up the flat; two rooms in a basement.

"You will be placed in Homes," was the explanation given. For fifty years these two old people lived together, shared joys and sorrows. They protested, cried, explained—all in vain. Their fate was decided in the office and after the usual test to recalcitrant paupers the two victims submitted. Bed, chairs and table were sold to the secondhand dealer for a few cents, then each of the two took a bundle in one hand, the picture of the dead son in another; one took the car for the north and the other for the east side of the city. The fifty years old bond was broken.

The cause of this act was the desire on the part of the charities to economise. The difference between keeping the old people in their own home and placing them in different Homes was eighty-five cents a month—twenty-one and one-quarter of a cent a week.

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It did not take very long before the old man went on that journey whence no man has yet returned, and a few weeks after his wife followed him. There is no doubt that the separation had hastened their deaths. They had been together for fifty years, each growing accustomed to the other's habits and ways. Then, of a sudden, they were torn apart.

Speaking to an official of organised charity I drew his attention to the ridiculous economy realised through separating the old couple. The man looked at me for awhile and as an answer he said: "You are a baby."

A few months later he announced to me: "You know the old fellow—Sig—died, and his wife also."

I wanted to tell him that death was hastened by the criminal stupidity of organised charity, but he went on exulting in his own wisdom.

"Now I hope you will understand that the economy was greater than eighty-five cents a month."

What did he mean? Was it purposely done to hasten their death and save the pension? I can see no other meaning in his words. But have you ever seen in the papers an advertisement displayed in a prominent place, reading somewhat as follows:

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"You are giving to charity; a hundred, a thousand or ten thousand dollars a year. Why not give it to organised charity and then send all the deserving to us? Not a cent is given before a thorough investigation is made by people trained to do the work and who know how. Contribute a regular sum yearly to organised charity. It will save you the annoyance of the outstretched hand and at the same time you will feel that you have done your duty towards the poor of the land."

All the homes I visited, more than twenty, here and abroad, impressed me with the terrible gloom that pervades their walls. It is the misery of a city housed under one roof. It is the pay of a life of toil, wearisome and ill-paid. The inhabitants know that the only issue is to the grave. They are not prisoners. They are free. But in their very freedom is the utter hopelessness of their existence.

"I forgot my name since I am here," an old woman told me. "You see nobody is *himself* here. You are to be just like the other one. Not one of us to be different. I was an actress once. This here was the audience. Each of us had his place, his work. Now it's all alike."

Another man told me that he did not think the sun ever rose since he was in the institution. By the thousands and thousands, these, our fathers and grandfathers, mothers and grandmothers, whose blood flows in our veins, whose toil we still enjoy, the makers of houses and bridges and machines—they all rot in some prison—a Home—under the pretence of humanity and pity. We don't want them to beg on the street, is the general excuse. Why? At least they would be free. They would not depend on a man or a set of men. They would not be referred to by number and catalogued as cases and treated like dogs. In his "Decay of Beggars," Charles Lamb says:

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"Above all, those old blind Tobits that used to line the wall of Lincoln's Inn Garden, before modern fastidiousness had expelled them, casting up their ruined orbs to catch a ray of pity, and (if possible) of light, with their faithful dog guide at their feet—whither are they fled? or into what corners, blind as themselves, have they been driven, out of the wholesome air and sun-warmth? immersed between four walls, in what withering poor-house do they endure the penalty of double darkness, where the chink of the dropped halfpenny no more consoles their forlorn bereavement, far from the sound of the cheerful and hope-stirring tread of the passenger? Where hang their useless staves? and who will farm their dogs? Have the overseers of St. L—— caused them to be shot? or were they tied up in sacks and dropped into the Thames, at the suggestion of B——, the mild rector of ——?"

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"These dim eyes have in vain explored for some months past a well-known figure, or part of the figure, of a man, who used to glide his comely upper half over the pavements of London, wheeling along with most ingenious celerity upon a machine of wood, a spectacle to natives, to foreigners and to children. He was of a robust make, with a florid sailor-like complexion, and his head was bare to the storm and sunshine. He was a natural curiosity, a speculation to the scientific, a prodigy to the simple. The infant would stare at the mighty man brought down to his own level. The common cripple would despise his own pusillanimity, viewing the hale stoutness and hearty heart of this half-limbed giant. Few but must have noticed him, for the accident which brought him low took place during the riots of 1780, and he has been a groundling so long. He seemed earth-born, an Antaeus, and to suck in fresh vigour from the soil which he neighboured. He was a grand fragment; as good as an Elgin marble. The nature, which should have recruited his left legs and thighs, was not lost, but only retired into his upper parts, and he was half a Hercules. I heard a tremendous voice thundering and growling, as before an earthquake, and casting down my eyes, it was this mandrake reviling a steed that had started at his portentous appearance. He seemed to want but his just stature to have rent the offending quadruped in shivers. He was as the man-part of a centaur, from which the horse-half had been cloven in some dire Lapithan controversy. He moved on, as if he could have made shift with yet half of the body portion which was left him. The *os sublime* was not wanting, and he threw out yet a jolly countenance upon the heavens. Forty-and-two years had he driven this out-of-door trade, and now that his hair is grizzled in the service, but his good spirits no way impaired, because he is not content to exchange free air and exercise for the restraints of a poor-house, he is expiating his contumacy in one of those houses (ironically christened) of correction.

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"Was a daily spectacle like this to be deemed a nuisance, which called for legal interference to remove? or not rather a salutary and a touching object to the passers-by in a great city? Among her shoes, her museums, and supplies for ever-gaping curiosity (and what else but an accumulation of sights—endless sights—is a great city? or for what else is it desirable?) was there not room for one *Lusus* (not *Naturae*, indeed, but *Accidentium*?) What if in forty-and-two-years' going about the man had scraped

together enough to give a portion to his child (as the rumour ran) of a few hundreds—whom had he injured?—whom had he imposed upon? The contributors had enjoyed their sight for their pennies. What if after being exposed all day to the heats, the rains, and the frosts of heaven—shuffling his ungainly trunk along in an elaborate and painful motion—he was enabled to retire at night to enjoy himself at a club of his fellow cripples over a dish of hot meat and vegetables, as the charge was gravely brought against him by a clergyman deposing before a House of Commons' Committee—was this, or was his truly paternal consideration, which (if a fact) deserved a statue rather than a whipping-post, and is inconsistent, at least, with the exaggeration of nocturnal orgies which he has been slandered with—a reason that he should be deprived of his chosen, harmless, nay, edifying way of life, and be committed in hoary age for a sturdy vagabond?

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"There was a Yorick once whom it would not have shamed to have sat down at the cripples' feast, and to have thrown in his benediction, ay, and his mite too, for a companionable symbol. 'Age, thou hast lost thy breed.'

"Half of these stories about the prodigious fortunes made by begging are (I verily believe) misers' calumnies. One was much talked of in the public papers some time since, and the usual charitable inferences deduced. A clerk in the bank was surprised with the announcement of a five-hundred-pound legacy left him by a person whose name he was a stranger to. It seems that in his daily morning walks from Peckham (or some village thereabouts) where he lived, to his office, it had been his practice for the last twenty years to drop his halfpenny duly into the hat of some blind Bartimeus that sat begging alms by the wayside in the borough. The good old beggar recognised his daily benefactor by the voice only, and when he died left all the amassings of his alms (that had been half a century, perhaps, in the accumulating) to his old bank friend. Was this a story to purse up people's hearts and pennies against giving an alms to the blind? or not rather a beautiful moral of well-directed charity on one part, and noble gratitude upon the other?

"I sometimes wish I had been that bank clerk.

"I seem to remember a poor old grateful kind of creature, blinking and looking up with his no eyes in the sun.

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"Is it possible that I could have steeled my purse against him?

"Perhaps I had no small change.

"Reader, do not be frightened at the hard word imposition, imposture—give, and ask no questions. Cast thy bread upon the waters. Some have unawares (like this bank clerk) entertained angels.

"Shut not thy purse-strings against painted distress. Act a charity sometimes. When a poor creature (outwardly and visibly such) comes before thee, do not stay to inquire whether the 'seven small children' in whose name he implores thy assistance, have a veritable existence. Rake not into the bowels of unwelcome truth to save a halfpenny. It is good to believe him. If he be not all that he pretendeth, give, and under a personate father of a family, think (if thou pleasest) that thou hast relieved an indigent bachelor. When they come with their counterfeit looks, and mumping tones, think them players. You pay your money to see a comedian feign these things, which, concerning these poor people, thou canst not certainly tell whether they are feigned or not."

The Superintendent, a man of about forty, of good appearance and strong physique, had just assumed his duties. Previously he had been manager of a department store. What recommended him to his new position was his reputation as a stern disciplinarian and strict economist. The first thing he did was to take an exact inventory of the property of the institution, then an approximation of what was necessary for the subsistence of each individual—so much flour, so much salt, so much meat—everything measured and weighed exactly. Instead of saying "so many people" the Superintendent would say "so many mouths." This done he proceeded to deliver to the cook the exact quantity necessary every day—the washerwoman received every week an exact quantity of soap—everything in order, strictly, soldierlike. The old people were compelled to get out and into bed at certain hours, compelled to report on certain days. Everything was very orderly, only the mortality of the inmates increased that year. The auditing committee saw no connection between the regularity and orderly keeping of accounts and the death of the old people. There was another item that did not interest them, namely, what was saved on food was spent on additional help. Not to attend the old people, oh, no! but to keep the lawn and garden in order. The Superintendent was praised. His keeping the things in such fine condition augmented the list of donors. The fund grew. It was invested in real estate, of course! To what other purpose could it be invested! Still another expense was not considered. But it was really a very small one. A few boards of white pine—a grave in Potter's field. A mouth is closed—a name is erased. The cook receives less flour, less sugar.

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Ah, the poor, the poor! When they are young they are called "Hands." When they get old they are labelled "Mouths."

If you want to see the product of modern society all at once, have, so to say, a bird's-eye view of centralised misery, go to see a "Home" on visiting day. Look at the expectant faces of the inmates; the ones that have somebody "outside." Cripples, consumptives, idiots, diseased of all kinds pour in one after another. Some bring little bags of fruit and cakes. One interchange was especially interesting to me. In a greasy old newspaper a boy of twelve brought butts of cigarettes and cigars to his old grandfather. In exchange he received a boiled potato and a few lumps of sugar. The transaction over, the young one went his way and the old fellow retired to his room to dry up the remnants of other men's pleasures. This old fellow was held in great esteem by the others. Not every old grandfather could obtain the weed from his grandson. To an old man news was brought that his daughter had died. "When?" he asked quietly. "Yesterday." "Why did you not let me know immediately?" he inquired. "I was very anxious to know. As for us, the sooner we die the better it is."

Those who come to visit "their people" at the Homes depend partially or wholly on charity. No appearances are kept up. Information is given, advice received. What to say, how to behave, where to go. Each class has its wisdom. The paupers have theirs. If the supporters of organised charity could hear what is thought and said about them and their good deeds! Perhaps we would have a few homes less, but also the number of people needing homes would be reduced.

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As long as you need "hands," you will produce "mouths."

EMPLOYMENT AGENCIES

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In previous chapters I have spoken of the "Bureau," and how they procure "help" in time of trouble. The employment department of the charities procure help in time of peace, industrial peace, also. When a man or woman has applied for charity and the investigator judges the applicant fit for work, he is immediately sent upstairs to the Manager of the Bureau, who is telephonically notified about the "customer" and his peculiarities.

"Mr. Gordon—Hello—give him a squeeze about his relations and how long he is out of work—also don't forget to ask him again about his oldest son. He told me that the boy is in the army—of course he is lying. Lazy? Sure."

Thus he is introduced to the Manager of the Bureau. Once upstairs the applicant is taken in hand by this gentleman and "given a squeeze" to see whether all he says tallies with what he had previously told the investigator.

The language used, the insults heaped upon him would stir the blood of any man—prompt him to violence, perhaps, but the applicants have no blood. Overwork, illness, hunger and lastly, the investigator, have turned it into water. Humbly, meekly, the man or woman stands it all; then he is told to come to-morrow at 8 A. M. The office only opens to the public at 10. "Why do you have them wait two hours?" I asked the Manager. "Just to get them trained to get up early," he answered. "You know the proverb 'Early to bed and early to rise.'"

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Meanwhile they crowd the waiting room and the "real" visitors, the committee, think the Manager very, very busy. The employers that apply for "help" from the charities are the worst ones. Long hours, low wages and the meanest working conditions imaginable.

To learn the situation exactly, I myself applied for a job at a "charity" office. I passed the examination of the Manager and was given a slip with name and address of the employer, a cut glass manufacturer in West 116th Street, and a postal card stamped and addressed to the office. I was to put the missive in a letter box if I were accepted.

The next morning at 7, as per instructions from the Manager, I knocked at the door and gave the office boy the piece of paper from the charities. I had waited a half hour when the foreman, a big, strong brute, measured me up from head to toe, then shook his head, dissatisfied as to my physical condition probably, and I was ushered into the office. Another wait, hat in hand. Then the employer wheeled around on his chair, and a new examination started. He was especially anxious to know the time of my arrival in New York. I pretended to be a newcomer, because I knew that he would not employ me were he to know that I was longer than three months in New York. They only want "greenhorns." They hunt for them around "Castle Garden" and in the charities. I satisfied him, and he announced to me the glad news that I was to receive twenty francs a week. He did not say four dollars—he said twenty francs because I told him I was a Frenchman.

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The foreman was instructed to put me in the galvanising room. When I entered the shop the fumes of vitriol, ammonia, sulphur and other chemical stuff almost choked me. The foreman had a good laugh at my face, then he placed me in a corner where lay a box of saw-dust. From another corner strips of galvanised metal were thrown to me and I had to dry them up with the saw-dust and pile them in another box which was taken away every time it was full. The fumes and the smoke were so dense that I could not see any of my co-workers until noontime. Then I saw them all, about forty men and women, all "greenhorns," Jews, Italians, Poles, pale, hungry,

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dirty, ragged, worn out, and all of them coughing—coughing so that the whole street echoed with the thunder of the musketry of the soldiers of modern industry. A half hour for lunch and back to the shop. We worked until 6.30 P. M.

I was discharged because I was reported to have spoken English to the caretaker, who pushed me roughly away with his broom when cleaning. Paying me 63 cents for my day's labour the boss called me liar and tramp. I had committed a crime. I spoke English. I was longer than three months in America.

That the working conditions were worse in that factory than elsewhere, where "regular" workmen are employed, goes without saying. Sixty-three hours a week for pay ranging from three dollars to seven dollars and fifty cents for men and two dollars to four dollars for women. The people working there dare not look at one another, dare not speak, dare not question. They know they are spied upon and reported to the charity office from where they are all helped. And this employer is mentioned very flatteringly for his cooperation with the employment office to "redeem" the sunken poor. In reality, he is plying his murderous trade under the protection of charity. His work would cost him three times as much if he performed it with "regular" men under usual conditions. As a matter of fact, the man started out with nothing and amassed a fortune in a few years. When a man has reached the top, seven dollars and fifty cents per week, he is discharged as "lazy," and another one at four dollars is started in.

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This is not the only factory of the kind. Scores of them grow and thrive under the kind protection of organised charity, to the glory of God and the humane century we live in.

"Dear Sir—You employ a number of men and women in your factory. Labour is very floating nowadays and we know the difficulty employers have to secure the right sort of help. When in need of help, why not ring us up? We always have a number of men and women who would not only be willing to accept any work at all, but who would feel extremely thankful to the one giving them a chance.

"When you get help from us you know you get the right kind. In addition to that, you assist us in our work of redeeming the poor.

"Respectfully yours,

"_____,

"Manager of Employment Bureau.

"P. S.—Right now we have some excellent help for your line."

This is a copy of a circular letter sent by the employment bureau of an organised charity to the manufacturers. Just think of this fact. One of these little sweatshop owners receiving such a letter when Samuel Gordon, who was getting six dollars a week, takes heart and demands a raise in his wages. Read that letter twice and carefully and see what it means. The employer is actually committing a good deed when he fires one of these men getting seven dollars or eight dollars a week and takes on one sent by the charities. Think of the P. S. "Right now we have a number of excellent help for your line." Tempting! is it not? "And be sure the men we send you are not going to make any trouble—an hour or so more every day and a dollar or so less every week does not stand in the way of the one *willing to work*."—This over the phone.

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MY LAST WEEK IN THE WAITING ROOM

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Monday.

When the door is opened more than a hundred people stream in. They have all been waiting outside, some sitting on the stairs, others walking to and fro. Of course, every passer-by notices them and knows who they are, "Applicants for charity."

I have heard that remark many a time when passing by. Fearing I might be taken for one of them I have decided always to wear a flower in the lapel of my coat. They will know that no man who applies for charity wears flowers. I also whistle and sing when I ascend the stairs. The other people, the investigators and office workers don't seem to take precautions in this respect. They take it for granted that no one will think this of them.

Mrs. B., the investigator, calls me aside and tells me of the wonderful play she has seen last night. She is stage struck and is even dreaming of her lost career. Meanwhile, the people, the applicants, crowd the room. I know that several of them are there to see Mrs. B. and I want to cut our conversation short, but she has buttonholed me and pours out her whole soul. Other investigators arrive and each one goes to her desk to finish up a report. Some of them want to see the manager and report personally on matters of importance. When I got through with Mrs. B. the waiting room is overcrowded. More than fifty women and men are walking around the room, pacing up and down the floor. There are not enough chairs. A young woman sits in a corner, in the darkest spot. She has a black shawl over her head and has drawn it so far over the face that only her eyes are seen. She is ashamed. She does not want to be seen by the others. I would like to know who it is!—would like to see her face—yet every time I pass her she draws the shawl more over her face—what beautiful, lustrous eyes! Where have I seen them? Where? She is

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in mourning.

It's remarkably quiet to-day. It's so warm. The investigators loll around and tell one another where and how they have passed the week-end, Saturday and Sunday. Mr. Cram comes up and makes an inspection. "We've got some new customers," he remarks to the office boy. "Plenty," the boy answers. I can't help thinking, what will become of that boy? He is so cynical, so stony-hearted, so cruel. Nothing astonishes him, nothing softens him. He makes fun of the most pitiful situation. As he walks to and fro calling the ones wanted by the Manager or bringing the records from the safe, he sneers at all the people in the waiting room. If a woman is in his way, he bows mockingly and hisses out, "My lady is in my way!" Purposely he jolts the men and then he demands excuses.

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Of late he has practised spitting at a distance. He takes a good aim at an old man or woman and from a distance of ten to twelve feet he hits his target. When successful he exults—champion of the world—greatest marksman. Of course, he does it secretly. Suddenly you see a man drying his face or cleaning his beard.

The office is in love with the boy. He is the pet. But still, what will become of him? How will he be father, husband, friend? I once asked him: "Say, Sam, what do you like best? What do you do in your free time?" "Oh, nothing in particular," was his answer, while he bit into a fresh piece of chewing gum. "Theatre, base-ball, ice cream?" "No, nothing in particular," he again answered. He is dead to everything. He is blasé. "Yes, Sam, but what do you intend to be when you grow up?" "I will work up here—work up to the top—you understand?" "Yes, but suppose a time comes when there will not be any poor." "Well, I hope the time will never come," and Sam walks away.

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There is a commotion at the door. A woman wants to enter the waiting room without a letter of invitation. She wants to see the Manager. She cries and curses. The janitor puts her out.

The "derelicts" become restless and nervous. It's 10 o'clock. A woman seated near the one with the shawl over her face wants to start a conversation. She answers her very curtly and turns her back. The office boy makes his appearance again. Sam announces that the "Boss" has come and work starts immediately. "Martha Blum"—"Joe Crane"—"Rita Somers"—and every time a name is called the people raise their heads at once. The lucky ones go into the other room to be questioned. Work has started.

In the factories wheels go round, clothes and shoes, and tables and chairs are made—consumptives and unfortunates also. Here, souls are torn, men and women degraded, insulted—that's their work. It's a bedlam. Accusations from one side and cries and appeals for pity from the other. They don't remain long. Still crying they are put out—and others are called in: "George Hand," "Carl Wender," "Gib Ralph," "Margaret Cy"—and others, others wend their way towards the other room.

"The terror" has come. Seeing such a big crop, she gets ready the threshing machine. From her room the cries are louder than from any two put together. The applicants also stay longer; she takes delight in their torture. Monday and Friday are her days. A woman has taken a fit. The janitor is called. He drags her out and lays her down in the hall. An old man tries to read the engraved letters above the door. They were once gilded, the gold has partly fallen off and it is difficult to read them. Slowly he reads them out, "Whosoever stretches a begging hand, give and don't question." He shakes his head doubtfully and tries to read the inscription on the other door, "For the poor of the land shall never cease." From the "terror's" room comes a young woman. Her eyes are red and tears run down her pale cheeks. She hurries out as though some one was running after her. What has the "terror" done to her? Look how she runs! I open the door and look after her. How she runs—how she runs. I turn round. The "terror" is near me. She is hurrying—ah! She triumphs. "What happened?" I ask. "She got her medicine—a good strong dose, too." She looks around the waiting room, searching for a victim. She notices the woman with the covered face.

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"What is your name?" I don't hear the answer, but the "terror" bids her follow her into the other room. I listen. The woman has awakened my interest. It's very quiet. The investigator raises her voice a few times but is met with such a quiet, calm answer that it goes on in the ordinary conversational tone for a few minutes. Then I hear the woman cry.

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But my attention is called elsewhere. An applicant does not want to get out of the investigator's room. She yells, cries and screams. "I want to see the Manager—I want to see the Manager—I have been put out of my rooms—my children are on the streets." The investigator, Mrs. B., uses force, but the woman holds on at the door. "I want to see the Manager. You can't torture me that way. I want to see the Manager." She screams yet louder. The janitor is called and he does his duty. Takes hold of the woman and puts her out. The woman screams in the street. A policeman is called and the officer gives the woman notice that he will arrest her if she does not desist. She still screams and refuses to go. The door opens and she sees the Manager as he orders her arrest for disturbing the peace. The test is applied. Of course she will be immediately released. The Manager telephones to the station at once that they should release the woman. Mrs. B., the investigator, is walking nervously from one desk to the other.

"That pest—that pest—she would not get out. I will give her a lesson. She will not forget as long as she lives."

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"What is the matter?" I inquire.

"For the last six months she bothered me that she wants to move out from where she lives. The rooms are too dark, the walls are damp and all that sort of thing. All she wanted of course was to get out of my district. You know, I keep them pretty well together, in a few blocks. You want to move—well! I gave her the chance of her life. Let her be on the street a few days, then she will know how to appreciate her house."

That old fellow who tried to read the inscription comes up to me, "How long will I have to wait? I have been called for nine A. M. It's half past eleven now."

"I don't know, old man. You just have to wait." He shakes his head and goes back to his place on the bench, and again reads the inscription.

"The terror" has released her victim. Coming out the woman leaves her face uncovered. She has gone one step lower, robbed of the sense of shame. She is young and beautiful. Pale, very pale. Her eyes are red. She cried. She has got to see the Manager. Before entering the sanctum she fixes her stray hair and dries her eyes. "She is green," remarks the office boy. "Doesn't know the trade." "Who?" I ask. "The lady in black." He looks around: "Gee—they done quick work."

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The investigators are in a hurry to-day. Noon. Only a few employés remain. All the others go to lunch. About forty applicants still in the waiting room. Their names have not been called. The janitor orders them out. Again they throng the street. He drives them off the stairs. They tramp the sidewalk, up and down, and it's so very hot, 96 degrees. I lunch with the others. Mrs. H. still talking about yesterday's show and about that woman that did not want to obey her and get out. They talk shop during lunch. Sam's prowess as a spitting marksman is highly praised. "Champion spitter of the world," Cram proclaims him. "A clever boy." "A sensible boy." "Gay." "Clever, very clever." "He will be a man." "Oh, yes, oh, yes. He will rise high."

Their admiration for Sam is boundless. They recall his repartees on different occasions and how he once cynically remarked to the Manager: "A woman died in the waiting room, sir. Shall I bring you her record? P. B. 9761 is the number." He got his raise not long after that. The Manager was struck by the boy's efficiency and his splendid memory.

"Why," said Mrs. B., "he knows all the records by heart. G. D. 7851 has four children, husband dead, three dollars r. c. cl. Just ask him when you want to know. He will tell it off before you can say a word or consider."

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Then from the boy the discussion drifted to the new Manager and his peculiarities and how he compared with the former occupant of his office. "He is too lenient with the people," says Mrs. H. "Wait until he gets fooled good and hard," intervened Cram. "Wait, when he gets fooled a few times and the committee grumble there will be something doing, I tell you."

The lunch finished, only Cram and I returned to the office; the others went to do outside work, investigating. On the way Cram expounded a new theory: The charities to buy an island somewhere and send all the applicants there—women and children separated from men—all to live in one huge building—a big home for the poor. It would cost less, he figured.

"But they would not go—they would not go, the scoundrels!" he lamented. "We are too easy on them. We are really doing bad work. We are encouraging paupers, our rule should be: don't give a cent until the applicant has no other alternative, 'charity or suicide.' But we are all weaklings, sentimental trash!" Thus speaking we arrived at the door of the office. Cram turned his head and pointing to the people walking in front of the building he made a broad sweep with his hand: "This whole damned pack is the degenerate fringe of our century. We should do away with them and not help them live." These are the sentiments of a superior officer of organised charity. "Say, Cram, why don't you resign your position? You don't like the poor. You don't believe in charity—resign!" "Neither do I like pig iron and I don't believe in love," he answered in bad mood.

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What does it mean? I had a smoke with him in his office in the basement. He was very talkative. Spoke about his past and future. He too hopes to reach the top. A good man for the job.

At two o'clock the doors are again thrown open so that I have to go to the waiting room. They must again give up their letters to the janitor. A scuffle again. One fellow wanted to enter without invitation. The janitor insisted that the man go down stairs to Cram's office, while the man wanted to go in. Of course the janitor won out. All the others, the applicants helped him. It's to their interest that there should be one less, they get more quickly through the mill. To-day is committee day. The big room is prepared. The office boy reads roll call to see if all those summoned are present. Then he looks up all the records and places them on the table at the place reserved for the Manager. The people waiting for the investigators are told to go home and come to-morrow. How they cry! How they cry! They know what that to-morrow means. It may mean a week and more. Meanwhile the pension is suspended, the children are hungry. "To-morrow at nine A. M. big sale of ladies' underwear," Sam announces. The ones with letters for the committee remain in the room. Not very long, though. Automobiles stop before the door and the gentlemen are immediately at work.

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One after another the applicants are called in. Their records and the investigators' are read and a new cross-examination starts. "What is the matter with you, Erikson? A young woman like you to apply for charity. It's a shame."

"But, sir, I have been ill." The Manager stops her impatiently.

"What about your children, Erikson?" One of the gentlemen says: "Hadn't you better give them to

a Home and then be free and go to work, as a servant or something. We could easily get you a place, you know."

"I would not separate from the children, they are too small." The mother, a young Scotch woman, defends her offspring. The gentlemen look at one another a few seconds, then Mr. R., the chairman, gets up and yells at her:

"You would not? Hein, you would not? We too, would not. How do you like it? What do you want with your three small kids? Here is a special place for them. The Orphan House. That settles it." [Pg 242]

And he sits down again and looks into another record. The mother wants to speak, argue, beg. "That settles it." She is shown the door. I follow her outside. She remains at the door for a few minutes thinking hard. Then she braces up, stamps her feet, and says very loud, "No, I won't, I won't, I won't give them up." She goes away.

Another man is called. He is a consumptive and very weak. He is even offered a chair and asked to sit down. He wants to go to Colorado. They are not very brutal to him. He gets the fare and a few dollars extra. "Good luck." "Thank you."

A few more are expedited very rapidly. Most of them are denied any help, but the chairman is very "soft" to-day. It's very hot and he perspires heavily. The boy calls out a name and an old woman comes in. She has a very dignified appearance and takes exception when she is not politely addressed by the chairman. He always takes delight in insulting those who are of better appearance.

"Sir," the woman says, "in a moment of distress I have applied for charity and I am given insults. I have been called three times here and what have you done for me? Nothing. Is that charity?" [Pg 243]

"Nothing! Nothing!" screams the chairman, and wipes the perspiration from his brow, "and what is that? Here we sit and sweat ourselves to death for you. Do we get anything for that?"

"Neither did I," the woman retorts. But the Manager is on his feet in a second, he tears the application, opens the door and pushes her out. "Get out, get out, and quick," and though the woman is going out, the janitor helps her descend the stairs.

The Manager returns to the committee room. "Yes, that's what we have to put up with!"

"What impudence," says one. "That's what it has come to," says another. "Pretty soon they will request upholstered chairs."

"I would have had her arrested," pipes out a stupid old degenerate who never says a word. They keep on talking that way.

"Shall we continue?" the manager asks.

"Not to-day," the chairman says, "it's too hot. Not until next week. They say that they don't get anything from our work, see how they will get along without it." He again wipes off his brow and goes out first. The others follow him. The Manager accompanies them to the stairs. The automobiles disappear.

TUESDAY

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Is there no way to finish it all? It's noon time now, and since nine o'clock this morning I have heard cries and screams and curses. I have seen tears, tears, tears. The investigators are worse than tigers to-day. They are all taking revenge on the poor for yesterday's occurrence, and Sam is surpassing himself. He spits again at one. I wish it happened that his "greeting" fell on me. I would beat him to within an inch of his life. Why does not one of the applicants twist that boy's neck! They are finished. They have no blood. Water flows in their veins.

No sooner did the doors open than one of the applicants had a fit. Mrs. H., pretending the woman faked, began to curse her.

Mrs. H. jumped at one of the women and called out loudly: "What do you want here? You will not get a cent. Get out or I will have you arrested." The woman began to cry and tear her hair, but Mrs. H. yelled, "Get out, get out," and called the janitor to do his charitable work. As though Mrs. H.'s temper was contagious, all the other investigators were horrible. Mrs. B. and Mrs. D. and Cram and Sam, and even that slip of a girl, that cripple with short arms like a kangaroo, treated the poor as though they had all committed the worst of crimes. That girl is only six weeks on the job. She is a brute now. No wonder! with such good teachers. The women sat on the benches and moaned and cried and tore their hair. That woman who had a fit came back to her senses. She got three dollars and was sent home. Mrs. H. protested. She still insists that it is all a fake. "Almost every applicant could throw a fit," she said; "one, two, three and they are down on the floor." Sam said that he has a new business plan: a school of epilepsy, ten dollars for the complete course. They could earn money with such a trade. It was the worst half-day I remember, and it was very hot.

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Really it could be called the "Garden of Tears." All the eyes are red and cold sweat covers the

face of every applicant. As Mrs. B. passed by the woman in black who had her face covered with her shawl she tore it down and yelled: "We want to see your sweet face, madame. If you are ashamed to show yourself there is no need to come here at all."

All the colour was gone from the woman's face. She looked more like a ghost than a human being. Her face and lips white. Her sunken eyes black, her mourning clothes accentuated the picture. She sat motionless for a few minutes then she covered her face again and went out slowly. I followed her to the door. She hesitated about which direction to take. Several times she retraced her steps as if she wanted to return to the waiting room, but she finally decided to go toward Fourteenth Street. I saw her stop before a window and dry her eyes with her handkerchief. She then disappeared down Fourteenth Street. "What will become of her?" I thought. "She has two small children, two small girls. If the mother is in the street what will become of the children?" Why did that brute force her to show her face? That's what she always does. When I once asked her why she goes around to the neighbours of an applicant and announces that "So and so belong to the charities," she answered me, "Whoever is ashamed should not beg." She would brand them on the forehead with a hot iron.

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I don't see why the Anti-Trust Law could not be applied to organised charity! They have made a "trust in pity," and are now treating the producers and consumers as they like.

That woman Erikson, who said yesterday, "I won't, I won't give them up," stood at the door more than an hour. She was not let in. Her letter was taken away yesterday. Now she will have to make out another application and wait for an answer. The committee only meets next week. I went out and asked her whether she had decided to give the children to an orphan home.

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"No, I won't," she answered, "but I wanted to see these gentlemen and see whether I could not soften their hearts. We could live on so little—on so little," she pleaded.

"It's of no use," I told her. "You can't soften their hearts. They are made of rock."

"Then what can I do?" she asked, crying.

"Anything you want, or you don't want, but don't come around here. The less you show yourself here the better for you."

She looked at me in a funny way. What did she think of me anyhow? Who knows what sense she gave to my words! God knows. I don't know what people will think when they read this. If they only knew what I know. There is no place on earth to duplicate this one. Nowhere can you hear and see what you hear and see here. The walls and pictures and benches and floors, everything is soaked in tears.

The Erikson woman got hold of the Manager on the stairs while he was going to his lunch. She cried. He listened to her very attentively, then he answered in that silky voice of his, "You put the chairman in a very bad temper yesterday, but I will do my best for you. Call next week." She wanted to say something but he strode away with such majesty! It's of no use, I foresee. She will give her children and they will place her somewhere as a servant. There is a great demand for domestic help. The domestic help problem is filling the columns of the daily papers. The office will do its best to solve the problem.

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I had a conversation with the janitor. He told me that the job disgusts him and if times were better he would throw it up. I thought for a moment that he meant the brutality of the investigators, but no. He says that these scoundrels, paupers, are yelping too much. He can't eat his dinner in peace. He lives with his wife and children in the building. What will become of his children? The sights they see every day! They understand it all. His little girl, a child of seven, calls the people "*delelicts*." "Papa, quick, a *delelict* threw a fit," she called out yesterday when coming from school for lunch. The father was upstairs. There is an old man coming every Tuesday for his two dollar pension. Sam announced him as the "dean." It can't be Sam's expression. He must have heard it from some one else of the staff. The cashier, perhaps! She is the daughter of the "terror." A true child, no mistake possible. She never pays out a cent without a remark. If it's five dollars she says, "One hundred times for the movies." If it's ten dollars, "Sale at Wanamaker's, latest style French hats \$9.98." "If it were in my power," she once told me, "they would never get cash. Bread, and meat and vegetables, but not a cent of cash."

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Strange they are always afraid lest the poor have too much joy! They would like to see them always crying, kneeling, begging. Before going for lunch, Cram had a long chat with the cashier. They are on very good terms. Mrs. B. even hinted at a secret engagement between the two. What a difference in their voices when they speak to one another and when they speak to applicants! It seems to me very strange to see them smile or laugh. I never thought them capable of that. I would like to see them cry once. Some spiritual pain, or a brick to hit them, and then to see them cry. Why not? They have drawn enough from the fountain of suffering—the eyes of the poor.

After the lunch hour I was given the address of Mrs. Erikson and told to reinvestigate her case. She has made an impression on the manager. He is not quite so brutal as his subordinates. He knows that charity is not solving the question of poverty and he doubts all the investigators. But he can't help it. The current of the old established system is too strong for him. As a matter of fact they are all working against him. Not openly, of course. They are continually intriguing and plotting one against the other. The women are Machiavellis in petticoats. Every move is spied, reported. They even investigate privately.

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I visited Mrs. Erikson. The usual thing. Have I grown callous? I don't seem to notice the difference between one case of poverty and any other. Even their talk does not interest me as before. I anticipate everything: two months back rent; owe eight dollars to grocer; one dollar and fifty cents to the coalman; gas bill, etc. They all owe back rent and the grocer and the coalman, the gas bill. Their rooms are all alike. Beds, table and chairs. They even look alike. Their original features are stamped out by the seal of charity. Their voices are alike, speaking in a subdued minor key of the same pitch and the same pleading inflection.

Her husband had been a longshoreman. He must have been a beautiful specimen of manhood. She showed me his picture, a blond giant. He died of Bright's disease. The two little girls resemble their father very much. I remember that Mrs. H. doubted the morality of an applicant because the child did not resemble his father. The woman probably likes to read good books, I saw Bjoernson Bjornson's novels on the mantelpiece. She gets her books from the library in Grand Street; I saw the stamp. I don't know what to write in my report. The woman can't go out to work. She has to attend to the children. She does not want to separate from them. She even hinted at suicide. I know she will not do it. There was no bread in the house. I left her a few cents. The neighbours help her out, but they are all poor people. I am sure that the chairman will not allow her any pension. She will have to give her children to the orphan home. I even tried to convince her that it is the best she could do. But she cried so much!

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It is terrible. No escape. However, I make my report; it will not help her in the way she wants. She has antagonised the chairman and he is not a forgiving man. And to think that he represents Christ on earth! He is Charity! I know that he is one of the worst employers. He crushes every strike with an iron fist. He has stopped at nothing yet. He contributes an enormous sum to organised charity. Is that payment for the pleasure they give him of torturing the poor?

I cannot eat, nor sleep. The cries of the day echo in my ears. When I try to close my eyes I see a woman throwing a fit or how they force one out. I always fear that Sam is aiming a "greeting" at me. The whole day long the image of the woman in black directing herself towards Fourteenth Street pursued me. How pale she was! Where is she now? Drunk in some back room of a saloon, a few men around her; and she laughs and cries. Early in the morning she will return to the children and buy bread and milk with the price of a night's degradation. How that brute tore the shawl from her face! "Show your sweet face, madame. If you are ashamed to show yourself there is no need to come here at all." When a young woman has lost her shame why should she beg? It's midnight now. I can't sleep. Where is she now? Where are they all? All those organised charity has driven to the street. Come out! Show your accusing finger. And the ones driven to an early grave. Come and show yourselves. Line up before the building. When the morning comes and the sun shines let the people see you in broad daylight. From your fleshless mouths cry "Murderers"! and let the whole world echo with your cry.

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WEDNESDAY

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On arriving at the office I perceived signs that this is my last week here. I have criticised freely the whole system. Some one has certainly reported me. No work has been given me for the last few days. When they sent me anywhere it was only a pretence. As a matter of fact the re-investigation of Mrs. Erikson was also given to the "Terror." I will try to read her report.

I passed my forenoon near Cram's desk, in the basement. Cram is in excellent spirits to-day, and though very gross in his remarks he is not so brutal as usual. He cheers them up when they come to his desk.

"Hello, mother, what's the trouble? Come, come, don't cry—don't cry—it will be all right. Go home, we will attend to that."

For one extreme case of starvation he even recommended immediate relief. It's strange how the whole basement looks more cheerful. Why, even the sun has put in an appearance—hesitatingly, of course. He doubts whether He is wanted. Some broken rays play on the desk and on the face of some woman. When Cram is well disposed even the sun rejoices.

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Most of the time was taken up by a stranded German actor and his wife. They were so elegantly dressed that we thought at first they were visitors, and Cram got up and politely asked them their wishes. The man speaks a broken English. He said they were actors and had been influenced to come from Germany on a bogus contract. They put up at a hotel and are now in debt there. Their baggage has been seized, they have no money, etc., etc. Cram offered them chairs and attended to them immediately. He put himself into communication with the Manager and with the Employment Office. Some one was sent to look for a furnished room, and another man was sent to the hotel to take out their baggage. Meanwhile the staff all came down to look at the unusual customers. They all respect and admire actors. Mrs. H. was exceedingly polite and nice, and even invited them to lunch. Of course the change affected the whole office. Every one spoke about them. Sam asked whether they were "real" actors. Only the "Terror" was suspicious. When they departed Cram shook hands with them and expressed his wish that they would soon be out of difficulty.

"Do not lose heart," he told the woman. "Such things might happen to any of us. Brace up, brace

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up." He was all smiles. I wonder what these people think of organised charity! The greatest blessing on earth, surely. If ever, in better times, they tell the story, they will emphasise everything. They were politely received, kindly treated, immediately helped, invited to lunch.

"Organised charity," they will say, "is the most beneficent thing of the century." All this because Cram was in good spirits to-day. If they had come yesterday, or if they were to come to-morrow, and find Cram in his usual humour. "An actor? You are an actor? And why don't you go to the actors? Who told you to put up at a hotel? Come to-morrow; we must investigate." They would have sat for hours and hours in the basement and heard how the others are treated. As it is, they are lucky people. Cram is in extremely good spirits to-day.

Meanwhile, all the others had to wait, but everything went smoothly. Most of the applications were accepted. Some were marked "urgent." The sun took courage and shone even brighter than before. "How sunny it is to-day," he said. Had this been so yesterday he would have turned round and questioned the sunbeams: "Where do you live? How old are you? How many children have you? What is your trade? You give light and warmth? You are a liar. I have never seen you here before. Go to your usual haunts. Tramp, vagabond, get out, get out of here." But to-day he is in good humour. What has happened? He asked my opinion several times, when dealing with a new case. He must have a beautiful voice. While studying an application he sang, *mezza voce*, the aria from Pagliacci. Why Pagliacci? I fancy because of the stranded actors. I told him to cultivate his God-given gift. He answered:

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"Why? Can't I speak to the rabble with an uncultured voice?"

"But this is not the be all and end all of your life?"

"I am too poor for anything. Voice culture costs money."

How ridiculous it all sounded. I am sure from the way he comports himself with the applicants they think him a millionaire and that the money given comes from his pocket. Still, I was glad to hear him speak about his poverty. I tried to speak to him about the roughness of the investigators, but he is a closed book as to that.

"Severity is needed."

I was afraid to continue the conversation lest his good humour evaporate, so I changed the subject. All he wanted to talk about was women. Had the sun anything to do with that? The cashier, his sweetheart, came down to see him on business. A pretence. She teased him about the actor's wife and he let it go as if there was something in it.

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"I invited her to lunch, you know," he said. What a liar. Mrs. H. invited them both, the actor and his wife.

I am going to see the Manager. It's settled. I am weary and worn. But I won't go until I have told him all I think of this rotten place.

AT NIGHT

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Finished. The whole thing has weighed so heavily on me. All interest in the work has gone. I have seen every form of misery the human mind could imagine. The facts merely repeat themselves. Hunger, degradation, insults, epilepsy. The investigators, the janitor, the policeman and Sam. From morning until night the same thing. I got to be callous. Well, people get trained to tolerate the most deadly poisons.

Thank God, my soul is not lost there. I cannot say that I come out unscathed. Oh, no. But I have retained my soul. Of all the different forms and institutions of charity which have come under my notice this is the worst place. Paris, London and Montreal are nothing to it. Of all the mills, here they grind the finest. I am leaving. Just going to finish the week. And I gave Sam a thrashing. I boxed his ears solidly and felt great pleasure in doing it. But this is not all. I did it in front of the applicants in the waiting room and finished it up thoroughly. Let me tell you how it happened.

About three weeks ago I was sent to investigate a case. Thoroughness was recommended. The address was in Sixty-sixth Street. Just as I entered the block a woman I had met casually at public meetings greeted me and asked whether I would not come up and have a glass of cold water. It was very warm and I did not refuse. I knew the woman but did not know her name and she did not know my present occupation. Great was my astonishment when we entered the very same house to which I was sent. It did not take long before I knew that she was the applicant.

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I told her nothing, but inquired how she was getting along since her husband died. She told me that some relatives sent her money to open a grocery store and that a society in which her husband was an active member gave her a few hundred dollars. She intended to peddle with laces and curtains and perfumery. She even showed me a bill from a firm from whom she had bought merchandise to the value of one hundred and fifty dollars to start with. As she spoke her children came in, a girl of about ten and a boy of eleven. The children had never seen me before. They knew some one from the charities was expected. I divined it from their countenances that they expected to be questioned and had been schooled by the mother as to what to answer. I was

right. When I asked the boy if he skated well, he answered that he had no skates, though I saw them under the bed. The mother interrupted him: "Sure he skates. He is one of the best skaters in the block. Put them on, Himey." The boy looked at the mother understandingly, as though he would ask, Is this not the one? and the mother repeated with emphasis: "Put them on, Himey." Pride, mother pride, was getting hold of her. "You should see them eat after a run!" I sat in the house a long time and convinced myself that she did not need help from charity. Her life and the life of her children would be wrecked. She had money. Her children go to school all day. She is strong and young. In accepting help from charity she and her children will become pauperised. She will not be able to attend to her business. She will have to do it secretly. All things taken into consideration, she will be the loser. I wanted to tell her all that, explain to her the wrong she is inflicting on herself and her children, that she is selling her soul and the lives of her children to the devil. But I could not open my mouth. I had come as a visitor.

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Then, I did not want her to know my occupation. Spy of Charity. She does not know why I do it. All I did was to encourage her, and I told her in a roundabout way not to allow anybody to patronise her. "Attend to your business like a man. Be a business lady. There is money in lace curtains and perfumery. Take a servant to attend to the house and the children and you go out for business." This is what I told her. I even advised her to put out a sign at the door.

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"This I cannot do," she said.

"Why?"

"Because I can't—many reasons why."

So, I thought, you bit the bait. It set me wild. Another customer, another target for Sam, another prey for the "Terror." And the children will be taught to lie, to cry and whine and beg. They will not be allowed to laugh or play. Every piece of meat they eat will be weighed and controlled. No roller skates, no new clothes. "Charity kids." No.

I made out a report in which I told the whole situation. That the woman has money and is about to start in business and needed no charity. I also asked them to keep my report strictly confidential, because I got the details as a "friend," and not as an investigator. How was I to know that the lady president of a Sisterhood affiliated to the office had recommended this case? Naturally, when she saw that her protégée was turned down she came to the office and demanded an explanation. The Manager showed her my report. The lady declared that it was a tissue of lies, and promised to bring the applicant to the office and have her face me. When I entered the private room of the Manager he began excusing himself because he was compelled to put me in a rather unpleasant position. However, he must prove to the lady that "our investigation is a thorough one," therefore he must ask me to face the applicant. I told him I would not do it under any circumstances. As a matter of fact, I said, I had betrayed her confidence.

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"I have promised and you must do it," he repeated.

"You should not have promised before asking me," I retorted hotly.

He disregarded my remark and called the president of the Sisterhood to the desk. He introduced me and said that I was going to prove the case.

"No, I will not, sir," I repeated. "I have told you that my report was strictly confidential."

The gentleman wanted to demonstrate his superior position, and ordered. I refused again, finished it off with telling them both all I thought about their work and tendered violently my resignation.

Coming from the office I saw Sam aiming a "greeting" at an old man who sat in a corner of the waiting room. I watched him doing it. No sooner was he through than I got hold of him, boxed his ears soundly and before any one had time to interfere I had turned up his head and spat upon him full in the face. It was a disgusting act, but a sweet revenge. I did it, then called out, "Feel how it tastes—you do it to every one."

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Needless to say, the whole office was up in a second. There was a terrible uproar. I won the enmity of the whole bunch. I had hit Sam—the pet, the future Manager; Sam, the greatest of them all; debased him in front of the applicants. The Assistant Manager came out to investigate what the noise was about. And no one—no one, not even the old man who was the direct cause of it, whose face was still wet from Sam's spittle, no one wanted to tell on Sam.

"Look, old man, your face is yet full of spittle."

"You are mistaken, sir," he answered, "to beat a boy. Shame, shame."

Soon all the applicants looked angrily at me and many said: "Shame, shame." Not one man or woman would admit that they had seen him do it at other times. I almost cried with rage.

The assistant manager was very much upset and wondered that I should do such a thing. "It puts you in a dangerous position," he told me.

I laughed. "My work is done. I have resigned," I answered as I went away. It's the best thing that could have happened.

I had a fine day. But why did not that old man tell the truth. If he were younger— But it's all over

THURSDAY

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What I vaguely guessed and knew and feared, has happened. The Erikson woman did agree to part with her children. Not only that but she seems to look upon their acceptance by the institution as a great favour. The manager saw his chance and is making difficulties. Now the woman begs that her children be taken away and she will attend to herself. If it had not been only yesterday that she seemed so determined not to part with them I would think that prospective matrimony is the cause of her change of heart. The Little God is a mean fellow, and with his dart often poisons a heart; especially a mother's. But after all I know this is not the reason. The woman is too hungry to think of love. Nature is on her guard. She does not want hungry beings to procreate. What is more certain is that she can't stand hunger, can't see her children hungry, and has probably made up her mind that the children's health, life, is worth her unhappiness. There is yet another possibility. Some "Madame" may have learned her plight and influenced her to go the easy way. She is not a beauty, but she is an attractive kind. Blonde, fleshy, round, healthy, a good reproducing animal. In normal circumstances she would be a nice mother of ten children and yet remain rosy and tempting. Under the tutelage of a "madame" she will "go it" for a few years and then finish on the Bowery or in Cuba in a "speak easy." A good many women have of late discovered that they have relatives in Cuba, have given their children to the asylum and have gone to seek their "rich relations." I know that some white slaver is after them. It is easy to get at the objects of charity. They are kept in one district.

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However, she did not say that she was going to Cuba so there is no use thinking about it. She told me that she would work as a servant. She thinks she will be an excellent cook. She will sell her household goods (a second-hand dealer will not give her more than ten dollars for them all) and until she finds a place she will board with some kind neighbour. She seems certain that in a few years she will accumulate enough money to bring her children back home and start in some business. This is just why I am suspicious.

As she spoke to the investigator she abjectly degraded and accused herself for not having accepted what "that fine big gentleman" proposed to her.

"I have been a fool—with no brain in head," she continually repeated.

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"No understand'—they want me good and children eatings every day. Please—please. No, I no more fool. Take children."

That change of heart in twenty-four hours, in a mother's heart, is due to something else than hunger. As a matter of fact she is not hungry now, neither are the children. There was too much animal life in them. They wanted to play. The mother did not look at them as she looked yesterday. She seemed to want to get rid of them, as though they were a hindrance. They are in her way—in her way to where? Servantdom cannot have had such promise for her as to make her part with the children. Hungry people look differently at their children. They feel themselves guilty when the children have no food, and are apt to look upon their greatest faults with condoning eyes. Mrs. Erikson was severe with them to-day. The children annoy her. She wants to get rid of them.

Although the arrangements were made telephonically in a few minutes, the Manager kept the mother and children waiting the whole day in the waiting room. I know from former experience that this is done in order to impress the woman with the difficulty of placing the children in an orphan home, and so that she will weigh carefully before she takes them out, in case the children complain.

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As a rule it works to the satisfaction of the office. On Mrs. Erikson it was probably worked as a punishment also. She was told to come to-morrow.

The Manager told her that he was working very hard to get them placed. The mother was weary and anxious. The little girl wanted to catch a paper flying about the room. The mother ran after her and slapped the child. Yesterday she said she would not separate from them; to-day she slaps them. She wants to get rid of them. They are in her way. In her way to what?

It was very funny during lunch time. As a rule we all sit at one table. I usually sit near Cram. As I entered the lunchroom to-day the chairs were so placed that there was no room for me. They were all so busy eating, seemingly, that they did not notice me at all. The waitress, not knowing of my disgrace, brought a chair and tried to place it near Cram, but that worthy motioned her away.

"It's for the gentleman," she said, pointing at me, and Cram reluctantly gave in. Not a word during the meal. All ate very hurriedly. They even shortened their stay, did not take any coffee. Several times I tried to start a conversation, but apparently they did not hear. It angered and amused me. Bunch of brutes, I wanted to tell them all what I thought of them and their work. Not to scoff or insult. I wanted to awaken in them human sentiments. I wanted to preach. I felt in me a power to move stone. But one look at their stony faces, and all desire for speech was gone. A frozen audience, an actor would say. Brutes, callous, hardened criminals. I sometimes think it's

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the revenge of fate. They rob the poor of self-respect, and are robbed in turn of the noble sentiment of pity. Even Pan would throw away his flute if he had to play to them.

In the afternoon the Assistant Manager called me in and said that he could yet smooth it out for me if I would apologise to Sam. I laughed at the suggestion.

"I am not very sure that I would succeed," he said, "but I think I could manage it. I have a real affection for you, and it was very hard on me to see you committing such an act."

I assured him that I would not apologise to Sam and even said that I would do it over again were I to catch him doing the same thing. But the Manager did not want to hear of it. "Sam has never done anything of the kind 'intentionally,'" he exclaimed. "You were excited and took for a deliberate act what was only an accident. What you should have done was to explain to the boy that spitting elsewhere than in a spittoon is contrary to the rules of the house, contrary to health and politeness." What was the use of arguing with that man? He did not want to see the shadow of the Pagoda:

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"Look, man, here you stand in the shadow of the Pagoda."

"This Pagoda throws no shadow. We all know that this Pagoda throws no shadow."

"But you stand on it now!"

"I don't see it. You are an infidel."

"I saw Sam doing it."

"No, Sam has never done such a thing."

"But he did it."

I repeated to the assistant what I told the manager yesterday. He listened with bowed head. Has he a conscience? I am sure that Mr. G. was prompted to his solicitude for me by the fact that they fear I will make this public, also that the Manager has instructed him to smooth matters. That oily man wants no friction. He thought I was sorry to have thrown away the job and gave me an opportunity to keep it, by degrading myself. They think that if I really need the position I will not stop at such a small item as apologising to Sam. The Assistant even mentioned "duties to family." They know how to coerce. I told him that I had had enough of this work and was not anxious to remain and that as for my "salary," it kept me in cigarettes. This cut short the discussion. He understood that I was in no need, consequently he could not degrade me. The law of the scoundrel.

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It made me think of that woman in black. How the "Terror" tore the shawl from her face. "If you are ashamed to show your face there is no need to come here at all." She was in need. She had her choice between the frying pan and the fire. She jumped straight into the flames. Evidently she felt it was the shortest route to death. I am not so sure of that.

They rage not to be able to bend me.

Suddenly I felt as though a heavy weight had been lifted from my shoulders. I walked out into the street. It seemed broader, lighter. Rapid steps brought me to the wharf. In time to see the sunset. To mingle with the crowd. The smell of rope and tar and of the acrid sweat of the home-going workers gave me new hope.

They will arise.

THE END

ONE OF OUR BIGGEST INDUSTRIES

According to the Census of 1910 the aggregate number of benevolent institutions in the United States was 5,408. Of these, 4,420 made reports of some kind to the Census; in other words 988 institutions failed to report at all. The number of institutions reporting receipts was 4,281; the amount reported for the year 1910 was \$118,379,859; 1,127 institutions failed to report their receipts. The number of institutions reporting payments during the year was 4,287; amount reported \$111,498,155; 1,121 institutions failed to report their payments. The number of

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benevolent institutions reporting the value of their property at close of the year 1910 was 3,871; amount reported, \$643,878,141; 1,537 institutions failed to report the value of their property. If all the institutions had reported receipts to the Census in 1910 the amount would reach two hundred million dollars yearly. If all the institutions had reported the value of their property, and this value should be brought up to date, the amount would be near to one thousand million dollars. The information asked by the Census was: (1) receipts from State, county, municipal appropriations, invested funds, donations, etc.; (2) expenditures for general running expense; (3) value of property at close of year. I quote the Census of 1910: "On information furnished from the returns it became clear that it would be impossible to obtain the desired information, at least in detail. Some institutions evidently did not keep the necessary records, others objected to making public their private finances."

Property of one billion dollars! Annual income of two hundred million dollars! And they "don't keep the necessary financial records and object to making public their private finances."

The number of paupers under the supervision of these "benevolent" institutions is more than two millions. Two out of every hundred people in the United States are in the clutches of organised charity.

It is one of the biggest industries in the United States!



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