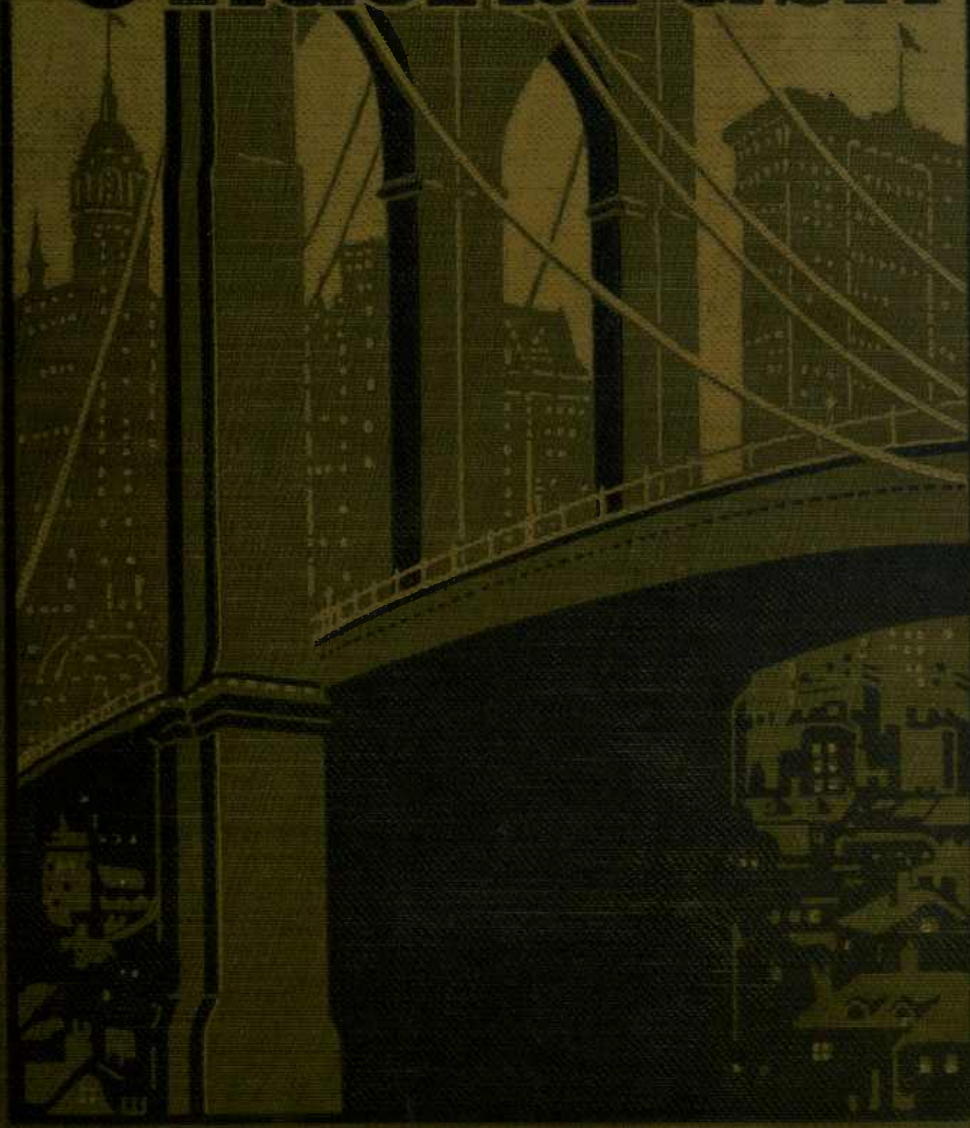


# Four Years in the Underbrush









FOUR YEARS  
IN THE UNDERBRUSH



# FOUR YEARS IN THE UNDERBRUSH

ADVENTURES AS A WORKING WOMAN  
IN NEW YORK



NEW YORK  
CHARLES SCRIBNER'S SONS


1921

FOUR YEARS  
IN THE UNDERBUSH

ADAPTED BY A. W. WOODS  
BY M. W. WOODS

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**FOUR YEARS IN THE UNDERBRUSH**



# FOUR YEARS IN THE UNDERBRUSH

## CHAPTER I

### FOR POLLY PRESTON'S SAKE

THE evening of November 8, 1916, I walked out of the National Arts Club and into the underbrush of the greatest jungle of civilization—I entered the world of the unskilled working woman of New York City. Though a sudden move, such an adventure had been in my mind for weeks. When thinking over the plot of my fifth novel my conscience had demanded:

“Why don't you go out and get first-hand experience for Polly Preston? She is a child of your own brain. You know her temperamentally as well as mentally and physically. You should be able to judge how she would react under given conditions. Come, be a sport! Get out and see what Polly will really be up against.”

When the opportunity presented itself on the above-mentioned date my reason for accepting it was for the single purpose of getting material for my novel—not because of any special interest in working people, either men or women, as a class. Indeed, it had always been my faith that they who scrub floors or dig ditches are only fit to scrub floors or dig ditches—humanity, like water, finds its own level.

The clock over the main entrance of the Grand Central Station was on the stroke of twelve when I passed under it on my way to the woman's waiting-room. Glancing around to select the most desirable of the unoccupied chairs, my attention was caught—a woman with a strong Slavic ac-

cent was giving a group of immigrant girls a lesson in—not English—American.

“Ello!” the woman exclaimed, and smiling broadly she extended her hand.

“Ello!” each girl responded in her turn, and she stolidly allowed her hand to be pumped up and down by the woman.

“Sure,” cried the woman, nodding her head vigorously.

“Zuer,” the girls repeated, and they also nodded vigorously.

“No, no,” was emphasized by a shake of the head.

“Nun, nun,” the girls grunted, but they shook their heads so violently that there could be no doubt of their understanding.

“Goo'-by,” the teacher said at the end of the lesson, as, rising, she held out her hand.

“Goo'-by?” the five questioned in chorus. Then they struggled to their feet and made an awkward attempt at shaking hands.

While the woman was in the lavatory, the girls, glancing around, saw me. Their prolonged stare was followed by an animated discussion. What was there about my appearance to cause any one to single me out for special comment? The quickest way to settle the question seemed to be to drag my chair across the floor and join the group.

“Hello!” I greeted the five as I planted my chair facing them.

“Ello!” was their relieved chorus, and cordial smiles flashed over the five faces which an instant before had reflected surprise with a glint of fear.

“Merican?” the girl nearest asked, and before I could reply the others questioned in chorus “Merican?”

“Sure, I'm an American,” I assured them, and very gravely I shook, in turn, five surprisingly large hands.

This rite finished, the girl next me reached over and stroked my muff. It was so evident that the others wished



to do the same thing that I handed the muff over. It was passed around the circle, each girl stroking it and pressing it for an instant against her cheek—a movement too distinctly feminine to need explanation. Once the muff was back in my possession their interest shifted to my shoes.

“Did they expect me to pass my shoes around for inspection?” was the query that flashed through my mind.

Fortunately the woman returned at that instant. She explained that the girls could not understand why an American woman with mink furs should wear such unfashionable shoes. The girls, all five of them, understanding her explanation, stuck out their feet evidently sure of my approval. They wore silk stockings with the latest cut of low shoes—high French heels with needle-pointed toes. The woman informed me that silk stockings and American shoes were always the first purchase made by an immigrant woman on landing in this country.

My reason for spending the first night of my adventure in the Grand Central was because Polly Preston would not have money enough to go to a hotel and, being a stranger in New York, would know nothing of the municipal lodging-house for women. It was far from a disagreeable experience—that night in the woman's waiting-room. Indeed, my attention was so absorbed by watching the persons around me, that the announcement of an early train for the West came as a distinct surprise. By the clock it was within a few minutes of five—a new day had come.

Passing through the great concourse of the station I entered a subterranean passage, and, on again coming to the surface of the earth, found myself near the corner of Fifth Avenue and Forty-second Street. Halting I gazed around in surprise. A dream city stretched around me—the city whose dimly realized beauty we all cherish in the depth of our soul. The wide avenue, the buildings, every object in sight, even space itself, was done in soft, luminous grays.

There was not a sound—no clang of surface-car, no honk of automobile, no rumble of elevated, no muffled growl of subway, not even the pad of a horse's hoofs on the velvet asphalt. I was alone in the heart of a great sleeping city—wonderful, mysterious, superb!

The realization of the marvellous beauty of the scene was so unexpected and acute that it hurt. In the pain there was an exaltation that lifted me above the problems of every-day life. Struggling to realize myself as Polly Preston I called to mind the lone five-dollar bill in my purse. Then I sternly reminded myself that my only other worldly possession was the scanty change of underwear folded about my tooth-brush and dressing-comb in the pockets of my coat. Contemplation of my poverty failing to lessen my enjoyment of my surroundings, I focussed my thoughts on my people—my sisters and my brothers and my cousins. How they would shake their heads could they know of my wandering around New York at night and alone!

"Thank God!" I heard them exclaim in chorus, "your dear mother didn't live to see it."

Instead of being overwhelmed by a feeling of forlorn loneliness I felt myself grin. Not even one small pang for setting at naught the conventions of my class! A longing to stop the clock possessed me, to hold back dawn, to keep the people asleep, that I, like a disembodied spirit, might wander over the city and drink my fill of its enchanted loveliness. With this wish filling my mind I stood staring along Fifth Avenue—down in the dusk toward Washington Square, up, up between the tall buildings that seemed almost a tunnel, to the faint luminousness which I knew marked the beginning of Central Park.

Yet, excited as my imagination was, it did not warn me that the adventure begun so carelessly would extend over four years instead of a few weeks—and those four years the most eventful in all history—that the war then going

on between a few nations in Europe would convulse the world and threaten the very foundations of civilization. No premonition whispered to me of the host of khaki-clad young men whose tramp, tramp, tramp along the wide avenue would be echoed in millions of breaking hearts throughout the length and breadth of our country. Nor of the return march of those same boys—yet were they the same?—in battle-marred uniforms whose faces, though alight with the joys of home-coming and the conscious knowledge that their strength had put an end to the world nightmare, seemed strangely old and still.

In the soft gray dawn touching with silver the still-life scene about me there was no suggestion of Fifth Avenue ablaze with silk flags, its asphalt strewn with flowers, its sidewalk packed by millions of people come to honor the famous personages who would pass, as in review, before the lions guarding the public library—a marshal of France, a general-in-chief of Italy, a king and his queen, and the future ruler of a great empire—each sent by a grateful country as an expression of gratitude and friendship to the people of the United States. And more thrilling perhaps than any of these parades was that at the head of which marched the President of our country, followed by thousands of women, soldiers who know neither nationality nor creed, and the red cross whose banner symbolizes universal mother love.

Then last of all a horde of Jewish children swept along the historic thoroughfare singing psalms of praise, rejoicing over the rebirth of the nation of their fathers—Jerusalem, wrested from Turkish rule, had after centuries again become the capital of the Jewish race.

Nor, standing there in that mild November morning, did I dream that within sound of the human voice almost under the eaves of the public library, as it were, I would find superstition more rampant than among the negroes in the Dark

Corner of my native State—a county untouched by railroads and cut off from the rest of the world by turbulent rivers, and in which the white children never have more than three months public schooling during a year and negro children much less. No guardian angel warned me of the plague of influenza that, sweeping around the world, would hover over our great city, touching alike with the finger of death those who dwelt in palaces and they who huddled in tenement homes. No suspicion of the coming of nationwide prohibition was planted in my mind, nor, more surprising still, the knowledge that at our next presidential election men and women, equal as citizens, would cast their ballots standing side by side.

All during those eventful four years I remained in the underbrush—the world of the unskilled working woman of New York City. During that time I held twenty-five different positions in almost as many different fields of work. I directed envelopes for a large mail-order house, was a saleswoman in one of the most advertised of metropolitan department stores, addressed envelopes for a woman's magazine, folded circulars for one of the largest publishing houses in the country, acted as saleswoman in the premium station of a large profit-sharing business, packed cigarettes, served as waitress in one of the more fashionable hotels at a popular winter health resort, was a packer in a cracker factory, an assistant to a chocolate-dipper in a candy factory, head chambermaid in the home of a millionaire, maid of all work in a two-servant family, helper in a church home for small girls, gentlewoman maid of all work in a philanthropic institution for dependent children, assistant in the loan department of a Wall Street banking institution—one of the largest in the world—and a clerk of the District Board for the city of New York. I addressed envelopes for the same mail-order house, was paid canvasser for the Woman Suffrage Party, proof-reader in that department of the Inter-

national Y. M. C. A. known as "the guts" of the organization, inspector in a gas-mask factory. I folded circulars in a large printing plant, stamped envelopes for yet another woman's magazine, worked in the Social Service Department of Bellevue Hospital, was a clerk in the offices of the American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, a license inspector for the same society, and finally saleswoman in the Store Beautiful—perhaps the largest and most beautiful store in the world.

Working shoulder to shoulder and living among my fellow workers on my wages, I became in reality one of the class known as Labor. I shared its misery during the months preceding the entrance of our country into the World War—caused by the continued low wages after the enormous increase in price of every necessity of life; and I suffered along with my fellows the nerve-racking period when our plea for an increase of wage hung in the balance. When finally the general increase was obtained I, with all other inhabitants of the underbrush, drew a breath of relief. When the trend of wages continued upward—judged by the reports in the daily press by leaps and bounds, but by us, who had struggled to keep body and soul together on six or seven dollars a week, or less—the feeling of relief deepened.

With the coming of national prohibition the atmosphere in the tenement districts of New York became almost that of contentment. Many women—hundreds of them—told me:

"My children have shoes, now that the saloon don't get the first pull at my husband's pay envelope. It's grand!"

But that atmosphere of near-contentment did not continue long after the close of the war. During my last year in the underbrush, the working world—including office-workers—had become as one huge caldron simmering, simmering, simmering with suspicion, fear, and hate. One of the chief

causes, in New York City, at least, is the housing condition. While the homes of the rich in the Golden Zone remain untenanted the year round, the tenements are so enormously congested that decent family life is next to impossible. Children and young people are forced to spend their leisure time outside their homes. One result of which is the rapid increase in crime—the so-called “crime wave.”

Because I am convinced that these conditions in America are brought about chiefly by lack of understanding, I shall write in the chapters that follow my experience during my four years spent as a working woman in New York City. And I shall earnestly try to show conditions as they actually exist. The bits of conversations given will be taken directly from my diary, and are as nearly *verbatim* as I could write when each incident was fresh in my mind.

How long I stood at the corner of Fifth Avenue and Forty-second Street, on that November morning, which now seems both so near and so far away, it is impossible for me to say. The spell that gripped me was broken by a sound like a whisper of a roar that increased until, with a clanking crash, an elevated train came to a halt at Third Avenue and Forty-second Street.

Turning down Fifth Avenue I set out in search of Alice Tompkins. Across Bryant Park a single lighted window near the top of a tall building flared out. In the east the waning moon hung a silver crescent against the purple-black curtain of fathomless space.

## CHAPTER II

### MY FIRST STEPS IN THE UNDERBRUSH

A NOTE from Alice Tompkins had been among the batch of mail handed me the night before as I left the National Art Club. She was in New York, and particularly wished to see me, as soon as convenient.

"Had she given up her teacher's position in the school for defective children?" I wondered, on my way to look her up. "And why was she stopping in such an out-of-the-way corner of the lower West Side?"

Though I loitered over the three miles and more of streets it was not quite seven o'clock when I rang the bell at the home for working girls which I found at the number given in Alice's note. The stare of indignant protest hurled at me by the woman who opened the door!

"No," she snapped, without giving me time to speak, "we haven't got a vacancy. Everything's filled up." And she would have banged the door shut had I not put my foot in the opening.

"I'm calling on a guest," I hastened to say, and taking out Alice's note I offered it as proof.

"Oh! I mistook you for one of them laundry-workers," she told me apologetically. "They're always ringing me up this time mornings, though it do seem like they'd a-found out by now we ain't goin' to take 'em in however often they come."

"Then you have vacancies?" I asked in surprise as she led the way to the reception-room of the home.

"Sure! Plenty of them for the kind of girls we want. What price was you expectin' to pay?"

She accepted, with a gracious smile, my promise to call on her in case I decided to come there to live. While waiting for Alice my eyes wandered speculatively about the bleak little room, and I wondered how much she was paying.

"Four dollars a week for my room and two meals a day," she told me, replying to one of my first questions. "That is one reason I wrote instead of waiting to call on you. I thought you might know of a better place?"

"You don't suppose you could find a place for less money?" Her discontent nettled me, for I had more than half made up my mind to come there to live.

"For less money!" Alice shrugged her shoulders. "It means paying four dollars a week for my room. The meals are simply uneatable." Then she explained her presence in New York. Being disappointed in the teacher's position obtained immediately on leaving college she had given it up and hastened to New York, confident that she would be able to get just the place she wished.

"It's the wrong season. All the agencies tell me they haven't a thing in my line." Then she added, with a snap of determination in both her tone and manner: "I'm not going back to Washington City—having people say that I can't hold down a job. I answered an advertisement in Sunday's paper and got a place with Jones Brothers directing envelopes and folding circulars."

My interest became personal. Polly Preston would be able to direct envelopes and fold circulars.

"What do they pay you?"

Alice shook her head.

"When the manager heard that I had been getting twenty-five dollars a week, he said he was ashamed to tell me what they paid. He asked what was the least I would come for. I don't see how any one can possibly live on less than twelve dollars a week in New York. Do you?"



"He'll give you more than that," was my confident assurance. "He knows you're a college woman. He wouldn't think of paying you less than fifteen, maybe twenty. If you will let me pay for my breakfast——"

"Don't you do it," Alice interrupted, grabbing me by the arm. "The bread is stale and cold, the butter is uneatable, the coffee is not coffee at all, and the milk is skimmed until it is a blue-green. You won't be able to eat a thing, and they'll charge you thirty cents for it."

While thirty cents did not, at that time, seem to me a great price to pay for a breakfast, stale bread and blue-green milk was not tempting. Though my plans had never included a second person, it now occurred to me that if Alice wished to join me she might be of real assistance as well as a pleasant companion.

"Wonderful!" she exclaimed, on hearing my explanation. "If we can only stick it out through the Christmas rush you'll get material for no end of stories. I've always wanted to see just what the Christmas rush is like in a popular New York store."

Alice was about twenty-three and small. Like many small women, she was continually standing on her dignity. And like many men and more women, the first of their family to attain a college degree, she was perpetually bringing the fact of having that degree before her associates. She was the best example I have ever seen of beauty without symmetry. Her dark hair was stringy, her face was long, her upper lip short, showing a glint of teeth, her brows were straight and dark, her lashes short and dark, her nose long and her dark complexion blotchy. She had but one really fine feature—eyes, blue-gray in color and eloquently expressive. Because of her eyes she must always be a noticeably attractive woman.

On leaving her I walked across town to the Central Branch of the Y. W. C. A., and after getting a satisfying

breakfast for fifteen cents I asked the price of rooms. The cheapest rate was sixty-five cents the night with two in a room. Clutching my pocketbook I hurried out—the purchasing power of five dollars might not be so great as it had appeared.

A subway train set me down at the entrance of a large department store whose advertisement for salesladies in that morning's paper had attracted my attention. The advertisement read "experience unnecessary" and I knew the head of the firm to be one of the most widely known philanthropists in the country.

In the employment department of this great store I stared at the voluminous application-blank given me to fill out. My age, color, nationality, my mother's maiden name, my father's profession. Were my parents living or dead. My own personal history for the past ten years. The names and addresses of two property-owners who would vouch for me.

"Ah!" I congratulated myself, on reading this last item. "The superintendent has his eye on you for a good position at a fat salary."

On returning the paper with all the questions truthfully answered the girl at the window informed me that they would drop me a card in a day or so telling me when to come to work. A glow of satisfied pride swept over me. Who said an unskilled woman had a hard time earning an honest living in New York? Alice hadn't found it difficult to get a job at a living wage. I was sure of one. However, no use loafing.

It was past ten o'clock when I applied at a mail-order house advertising for addressers.

"Any experience?" was the only question asked by the kindly little manager.

Who has not addressed envelopes? It proved to be piece-work in a well-lighted, comfortably heated loft. At five o'clock that afternoon I had finished one thousand

envelopes and thereby earned one dollar and a quarter—it being three-line work. On leaving the building the problem of where to spend the night faced me. A thought of the municipal lodging-house for women again occurred to me, but recalling that I was a working woman, not an investigator, and as Polly Preston would know nothing about such a place, I pushed the suggestion aside. Returning to the Y. W. C. A., I meekly asked for a bed in a sixty-five-cent room.

My roommate was an oldish young lady who confided to me that she had come from a small town in the Middle West to take a position with the Metropolitan Opera Company. She had no acquaintance with the manager or any member of the company. Indeed I could not learn that she had an acquaintance in New York City. Her confidence was nothing short of sublime. While she might not get a leading rôle, never having studied abroad, she assured me that she had a hunch that she would get an important part—far above the chorus.

All the evening and far into the night, when she was not singing the latest ragtime she was crowing like a hen. She called it exercising her upper register. Having spent one year as a student in a conservatory of music I knew from experience the only thing to do was to let her find out conditions for herself.

The following day by writing steadily from eight to six I managed to address fifteen hundred envelopes. The companionship of the six women who shared the long table with me was diverting. Before the day was half gone each of the five had confided to all within reach of her voice her personal history and reason for working. During the lunch-hour the sixth woman continued to write, nibbling from time to time at an apple and what appeared to be a slice of dry bread. Finally she inquired if I were married.

“You’re lucky,” she congratulated me. “If I could

make sure my four children would be took care of I'd put myself to sleep and never wake up."

"How about your husband?" was my horrified rejoinder.

"He's gone," she replied with a quavering little chuckle. "When our fifth baby came he left." After a pause she added: "Maybe he wouldn't have gone if he'd a-knowd it was goin' to die so soon." Another pause. Then wistfully: "Maybe he would—never no countin' on a man."

The next day at eleven the little manager informed us that having finished all the envelopes he would have no further need of our services until time to send out their spring catalogues. Having received a post-card from the department store telling me to report ready for work at eight-thirty the following Monday morning, this abrupt ending of my first job caused me no regret.

Deciding to devote the afternoon to looking for rooms, I hurried back to the Y. W. C. A. and approached the woman in charge of the Rooming Bureau. When she learned that my limit was two dollars and a half a week she shook her head. She had not had a room as low as that in at least two years. So late in the season and two rooms on the same floor? Impossible! When I reminded her of newspapers and magazine articles advising working women on the economic division of their wages her face crinkled into a smile.

"Those people find out the wage of the average working girl—some don't even take that trouble—then they sit at their desks and divide it up for her. Sometimes they make real touching stories. I've often wondered how much they are paid." She looked me over. "Perhaps you can tell me? You are a writer."

The attack was so unexpected that I actually stuttered. When I asked why she had made such a guess she replied indifferently:

"Only a professional social investigator or a writer could

be so ignorant and at the same time so cock-sure. You are not a social investigator. At least I never saw one whose shoes were so clean this late in the week."

On my making a full confession her interest was aroused. When she was convinced that Alice and I purposed to live on our earnings she turned her catalogue of rooms over to me. Selecting twenty of what appeared to me to be the most desirable addresses I set out.

It was after three o'clock when the door at the last address on my list closed behind me. The cheapest room I had seen was three dollars and a half a week. Its only window opened on a shaft and there was no heat of any sort. In an effort to bolster up my flagging spirits I became defiantly independent.

Why confine myself to the Y. W. C. A. list? I had passed a number of attractive-looking houses with the sign "furnished rooms" out. Why not investigate them? Alice and I were both old enough, had sufficient experience and judgment, to see if anything was amiss.

Just off one of the most beautiful squares in New York I came upon an unusually attractive-looking house with a furnished-room sign out. Even the sign itself was neater and more cheerful-appearing than any that had previously attracted my attention. The door was opened by the landlady. It was a charming room—on the second floor with a huge bay window—that overlooked a well-kept back yard. The bathroom was on the same floor, and in a little private hall just outside the door of the room there was a gas-stove with two burners.

On learning that the rent was three dollars the week, including gas for cooking, I opened my pocketbook to pay a week advance.

"Emily."

Quickly turning toward the door from which direction the call appeared to come, I as quickly remembered that

my mother had been in her grave more than fourteen years. Without thought, moved entirely by instinct, I slipped by the woman and out of the room. Halting on the stairs between her and the door I explained that it seemed to me wiser to consult Alice before definitely deciding.

Out on the streets my cheeks tingled with shame. Was I a fool or a coward or both? There had been nothing suspicious about the woman and certainly her house was more attractive than any on the Y. W. list. Out there in the sunlight it seemed the height of absurdity to imagine that my mother had spoken to me. Deciding to telephone Alice and ask her to meet me at the house on her way from work I turned toward Third Avenue to look for the nearest drug-store.

Discovering that I was almost under the eaves of a home for deaconesses, it occurred to me that they might have a list of decent rooming-houses in that neighborhood. At any rate, I reasoned, they would certainly be in a position to reassure me about the house I had just left.

While the little deaconess who opened the door was going over her list of rooms looking for a vacancy, I mentioned having called at a house on that block, giving the number.

"Oh, my dear!" she exclaimed. "You mustn't think of going there. That house has been raided by the police three times within the past month."

When at last she found a rooming-house on her list not marked "filled" she gave me the address. Within half an hour I had taken and paid for exactly what Alice and I had set our hearts on—two small clean rooms on the top floor in the back of an old-fashioned house in a convenient and decent neighborhood.

"Of course we shall have to keep our living expenses within what you are now paying," I told Alice that evening, when she stopped in on her way from work. "Two dollars and a half each a week for rent and one dollar and a

half each for our household budget. It would have been nicer if you could have moved to-night."

"I'd have come quick enough," Alice retorted. "You told me not to dare to come before Tuesday."

"Certainly. You have paid until Tuesday noon. You cannot afford to give that home the price of five meals and three nights' room-rent. We are out to learn the value of money, not how to spend it."

"I don't believe we'll get very much to spend," Alice replied despondently. "Everything in New York seems very expensive. Maybe the food they give us at the Home is as good as——"

"Stop it! If you knew the price of foodstuffs in the push-cart markets you'd know that three dollars a week will give two women all they can eat—provided they do their own cooking and use common sense in buying."

"Will you do the buying for the first week?" Alice demanded.

"No indeed. No weekly shifts for me—either as a buyer or as a cook. A month is the shortest period one should attempt when economy is to be considered. I have thought it all out. The one who does the buying cooks dinner and washes up the breakfast dishes. The other washes the dinner dishes and cooks breakfast. How does that suit you?"

"I'm willing to do the work," Alice assured me. "But I believe we'll starve to death if we don't put in more than a dollar and a half a week for food."

"I was forgetting to tell you about my adventure," I said, hoping to give her a change of thought and thereby stop her croaking. "It was really exciting." I then described my experience at the unlisted rooming-house and the deaconess home.

"How comforting it is to know that the spirits of our loved ones are always hovering around us, guarding us from

harm!" she commented solemnly. "After such a direct manifestation— What!" she cried, interrupting herself as she realized the significance of my smile. "Do you mean to say that you don't believe your mother could come to warn you?"

"I know nothing about would or could, but I don't believe she did. What you call a direct manifestation seems to me merely a vestigial faculty inherited from our remote ancestors—who, not yet having developed the orderly, conscious mind, existed by means of powers akin to instinct of animals. It may not be very flattering to think of one's ancestors as the missing link, but I prefer it to the suspicion that the spirit of my mother has nothing better to do than to chase around after me."

For a few minutes there was a profound silence. Then Alice began to snap and unsnap the fastening of her glove while I continued to polish my shoes.

"Well," my friend began with a sigh, "of course every one has a right to their own opinion. I don't believe in the missing-link theory. What's more, I do believe in a hereafter and that I shall be able to come back and help the people I love."

"Don't forget the parable of Lazarus and Dives," I cautioned her, as I stored the bottle of shoe-polish on the shelf of my tiny wardrobe. "In that parable it is made very plain that as the brothers of Dives had not heeded the teachings of Moses and the prophets they would pay no attention to Lazarus risen from the dead. My plans for the next world do not include any time or thought devoted to the interest of my friends."

Alice dragged her chair nearer to mine and looked eagerly into my face.

"Tell me," she asked breathlessly. "What do you plan to do? What is the very first thing you plan to do when you step behind the curtain of now?"



"Get Mr. Shakespeare and Lord Bacon in a corner and make the old codgers tell me who really did write the plays."

Unable to keep my face straight a moment longer I hurried across the hall and turned on the water in the bathtub. Returning to the room a few minutes later it was evident from the prim set of Alice's lips that she had decided to overlook my levity. What had come over the girl?—I wondered. Why had she suddenly become such a killjoy?

"You haven't asked me about my salary," she said, almost as though in reply to my questions. "This was pay-day."

"How much did you get?" My eagerness was not assumed. "You will remember my telling you that you'd get a good salary. How much?"

"Eight dollars."

"What?" The next instant it dawned on me that she was jesting. "Oh, I see! Eight dollars a day. Do they pay you forty-eight or fifty-six a week?"

There was a pause, then she glanced up at me with a little twisted smile.

"Eight dollars a week." Answering my continued speechless stare she added: "All the other girls got seven—I saw their envelopes. Some of them have been working there more than a year. Evidently," she said bitterly, "that one dollar is a concession to my college degree."

Taking my seat on the foot of the bed I stared through the window at the torch flaming on the top of the Metropolitan tower. Eight hours a day, six days a week—they did not even give Saturday afternoon. Eight dollars a week minus sixty cents car-fare—twelve cents the hour. And in a publishing house of international reputation!

At this thought I burst out laughing. Alice stared.

"Those are the kind of publishers dear kind Mr. Hezekiah Butterworth used to caution me against," I explained.

"It was just after the publication of my first novel—a 'best seller,' as you may recall. When I used to grow enthusiastic about my publishers, Mr. Butterworth would remind me: 'Don't forget, my dear, Judas Iscariot was a publisher.'"

But even the silliness of this hoary joke did not make Alice forget her disappointment. Watching her as she sat silent and woebegone in the meagre light of the bare little room I congratulated myself on having induced her to join me. What a mine of material she would furnish me! Polly Preston working in New York at twelve cents an hour, half-fed, going without clothes, perhaps walking ten miles a day to save car-fare. With such a background there could be no doubt about my making an intensely emotional story. Of course, I reasoned to myself, out of the abundance of my salary I would see to it that Alice did not actually suffer.

"What do you advise me to do?" Alice finally asked, interrupting me in the midst of my ghoulish air-castle architecture. "Do you think I had better go back to work on Monday or—or go home?"

How I wished she had not asked me that question! It is not easy to act the ghoul when the person you plan to plunder sits up and holds out her hands to you. In that instant I saw all the material—the very best material—needed to build my History of Polly Preston go up, as it were, in thin smoke. With a sigh of genuine regret I said:

"Go back to work," and my voice was emphatic. "You don't want to throw up the sponge and go back home your first year out of college. Eight dollars a week will pay your actual living expenses. You needn't run behind. Besides," I added as a morsel of consolation, and with an unholy sigh, "it won't be for long. As soon as I get settled in the department store I'll look around and get you a good opening."

"But you don't know that you are going to get a decent

wage!" Alice wailed. "You may not get much more than they pay me."

"Don't be silly," I reproved, suppressing the irritation caused by being forced, as I considered it, to fill up with my own hands such a rich mine of literary material. "If you had seen that application-blank you'd know that I am to get a good—not wage—but a good salary, a good fat salary."

## CHAPTER III

### SLIMY THINGS THAT WALK ON LEGS

MONDAY morning I jammed myself into a subway train bound for the responsible, high-salaried position which my vanity assured me waited for me in the department store. Arriving a few minutes after eight I found at least fifty women and girls already waiting and fully as many more came later. On the opening of the employees' entrance we were directed to one corner of the damp, unheated basement and there kept standing for nearly two hours. Finally a man and a woman made their appearance and divided us into squads of five or six.

The squad to which I was assigned was told to follow a little girl with a pale face and very bowed legs. After about a half-hour spent in climbing up and down stairs and waiting outside closed doors we at last came to a halt in the loft in which we had left our hats and coats. Here, after a wait of another half-hour, a youngish man took charge of us and conducting us to one corner of a large lunch-room informed us that he would teach us the cardinal principles of salesmanship. This, so far as I was able to understand, comprised making out sale-slips and wearing a perpetual smile and a black shirtwaist.

"The company won't stand for a grouchy saleslady. I'm tellin' you," this teacher warned us at the end of the lesson. "And if you don't want to get fired you'll come to-morrow in a black shirtwaist. Skirts don't matter so much, but you must wear a black waist. You can get 'em at the regular counter—dollar and a quarter, all sizes."

Being paired with a woman whose name, she confided to me, was Mrs. McDavit, I was ordered to follow yet another little girl with a pale face and very bowed legs. Coming to a halt in the underwear department, the little girl turned us over to the aisle manager. He stationed us at a long aisle-counter piled with garments ranging in price from nineteen to ninety-seven cents. A Mrs. Johnson, who was in charge of an adjoining counter, was to see to it that we made no mistakes.

When ordered, by the assistant aisle manager, to go with Mrs. Johnson to lunch, my salesbook showed that I had sold three times as much as Mrs. McDavit and considerably more than Mrs. Johnson.

"You'll make a good saleslady," Mrs. Johnson encouraged. "Maybe they'll make a permanent of you."

"What am I now?"

"You're an extra. You'll get paid every night."

"How much?" I asked.

"Dollar a day."

Stopping in the middle of the floor I stared at the two women. "A dollar a day! Did you know you were to be paid only a dollar a day?" I demanded of Mrs. McDavit.

"'Tain't much," she apologized, "but my daughter thinks it better than takin' in wash."

"My son has charge of a stationary engine and Mondays and Saturdays are his long shifts," Mrs. Johnson explained. "I can work without his knowing it. He's studying for the ministry and me earning two dollars a week makes it easier for him."

In the lunch-room maintained by the firm for its employees, from a long list of what appeared to be low-priced dishes I ordered vegetable soup, a baked apple, and bread and butter. The enticingly misnamed soup proved to be hot water thickened with flour and colored with tomato

catsup. After investigating the lumps of uncooked flour at the bottom of the bowl I put it aside and devoted myself to the lumpy little apple and the bread and butter. This last consisted of two thin slices of white bread between which was the thinnest coating of butter I had, at that time, ever seen. Later I learned that it was put on with a brush dipped in melted margarine.

Shortly after three o'clock the aisle manager ordered me to report to the superintendent. That dignitary pompously ordered me to report the following morning and take charge of the counter at which Mrs. McDavit and I were stationed.

"We've decided to keep you on regular," he informed me.

"How much am I to be paid?" I asked.

"Six a week," was his complacent reply.

"No wonder your advertisement is always in the papers."

He came down in his chair with a bang.

"We have girls who have worked here months, years," he retorted angrily. "They are content on six dollars a week, glad to get it. You are only a greenhorn."

"But not green enough to work for six dollars a week," and turning I left his office.

So ended my dream of a highly paid responsible position.

Employees not being allowed to use the elevator during busy hours, I was forced to tramp up three flights of stairs. On reaching the counter I swung out the silly little seat attached to one of the table-legs and sat down.

"Get up. Get up," Mrs. Johnson urged in a whisper as she hurried toward me.

"Won't they even let you sit down?" I demanded, struggling to my aching feet.

"They won't say nothing to you but if the aisle manager sees you he'll put you on their black list."

I looked the two women over. Mrs. Johnson's white

face was haggard until it looked pinched. Mrs. McDavit had lost much of her ruddy color and dark circles had formed under her eyes.

"You are both dead tired. Both ready to drop," I told them. "Your feet ache so badly that you feel like cutting them off."

"If my back didn't ache I don't believe I'd mind my feet so much," Mrs. Johnson admitted. "When I was young girls didn't go to business as they do now, so I didn't get no training. Maybe if I had it wouldn't come so hard to me now."

"It's harder than washin'. I've found that out," Mrs. McDavit said. After a moment she added diffidently: "If you was a married woman you'd know how hard it is to work at a thing that made your children ashamed of you."

It was not long after this little exchange of confidences that an elderly man, whom I had noticed earlier in the afternoon loitering near our counter, approached and spoke to me.

"These are not of very good quality?" he questioned, fingering the underwear.

"They are unusually good value," I truthfully replied. "Good for the price."

"Not such as a lady like yourself would prefer?"

"We cannot always choose," I answered, recalling my one change of undergarments.

"You would like those better," he said, indicating the display of silk underwear at the regular counter.

"Any woman would," I admitted indifferently, as I turned to wait on a customer.

A few minutes later Mrs. Johnson asked my bust measure. She explained that a customer at the regular counter was buying silk underwear for a lady about my size. Glancing across I saw the elderly man talking with the regular

saleswoman. He looked to be a man of refinement with ample means.

The next time my end of the counter was free of customers he approached me and thrust a parcel into my hands.

"What is this for?" I asked, recognizing that it was the parcel he had received at the regular underwear counter.

"For you," he leered. Then before I could so much as wink my staring eyes he whispered: "I want you to meet me to-night—in Times Square drug-store at eight—sharp."

Every drop of blood in my body seemed to rush to my head. In that instant I realized the significance of the expression "seeing red." I was all but blind and choking with rage. Another instant and I would have done my best to wring his flabby neck.

A woman at my elbow asked the price of a corset-cover. At the elevator the old reprobate turned and blew me a kiss from his gloved fingers.

Mrs. Johnson and Mrs. McDavit received my indignant explanation more calmly than I had expected.

"They usually come round this time," Mrs. Johnson stated. "They wait until a girl is all tired out, willing for 'most anything. Then they flash their money before her eyes. It's a cruel shame."

"I'm going to tell the aisle manager!" I declared, disgusted by what appeared to me the callous acceptance by the two women of a heinous condition.

Mrs. McDavit grabbed me by the arm.

"Hush," she told me. "Hush! Don't talk so loud. My daughter had a friend who was fired for doing that. They wouldn't give her a reference—she'd worked for 'em more'n two years."

Mrs. Johnson took the parcel of silk underwear and slipped it under the garments on our table. Later, when



it was uncovered by a customer, Mrs. McDavit handed it to the aisle manager, who in turn sent it to the lost and found desk.

At six o'clock the extra saleswomen were called on to sign for and receive their pay for that day. Opening my envelope I stared at its contents. I had risen before six, dressed without time for a proper bath, cooked my breakfast, stood packed like a sardine in a subway train for more than ten miles, worked standing on my feet all day, been forced to accept the vile allurements of an old reprobate all for—one dollar. Surely no ruby, no pearl, ever cost more! A bit of green paper!

It was nearly half past six when the closing-bell rang—the store having first to be cleared of inconsiderate customers. Another ten minutes was consumed in tidying up the counters and drawing on their covers. And yet another ten minutes was required to cross to the loft building and get our hats and coats.

As we poured out the wide door a steady stream of women and girls, by the hundreds, it gave me a thrill of pleased surprise to realize that we were not unexpected. It had not occurred to me that the fathers, brothers, and sweethearts of my fellow workers would be on hand to escort them home. Yet there they were, a double line of them stretching along both sides of the street for more than one long block.

As we passed between this double line the men, one by one, would step out and take the arm of the girl or woman for whom he waited. Turning to cross the street I noted unheedingly that a man detached himself from the outer line and was coming in the same direction.

"Wait there, Maisie," he called. He was so near me that, fancying he had made a mistake, I glanced back to see if he really was calling me. "Wanter make five dollars easy money?" he asked, grinning in my face.

I stepped up on the sidewalk and faced him. It was on a corner and under the full glare of an electric light.

"You go to hell," I told him.

Had he come one step nearer I would have done my best to have sent him to hell. The ferule of a steel-framed umbrella is a dangerous weapon in the hands of an infuriated woman.

The next morning on being awakened by the alarm-clock I bounded out of bed only to sink back with a half-smothered wail of pain. The muscles of my feet, my ankles, and my legs up to the small of my back felt like red-hot cords suddenly drawn taut through my raw flesh. Every inch of me below my waist ached horribly. Involuntary tears sprang to my eyes. It took more than ten minutes for me to get a grip on myself. Then carefully and painfully I raised myself to a sitting position and finally stood on my aching feet.

The Metropolitan clock chimed for the first time that day as I halted at a subway entrance and bought a newspaper. Having determined to get work that would enable me to sit down until my feet and limbs stopped aching, my heart throbbed with pleasure on finding an advertisement for addressers. Knowing the importance of being among the early arrivals, I hurried to the place indicated.

"We pay one dollar a thousand," the assistant manager, a young girl, informed me. "And please be careful with the file."

It needed only a glance at the return address on the envelopes to assure me that we were working for one of the most widely known woman's magazines in the world. Sure of having found a good job even at one dollar a thousand I glanced around me. The loft was in a large corner building and might have been well lighted as well as comfortably heated had the windows been washed. At first I mistook them for ground glass.

There were only fourteen women besides myself, though judging by the chairs and tables accommodations had been provided for fully two hundred. Having seen the number of women turned away by the mail-order house, this scarcity of workers caused me considerable surprise.

Drawing a card from the file I stared at it in astonishment. Instead of a distinctly written name and address in black ink on a white card this thing was in two shades of purple, the name and address stamped in purple on a thin glazed purple paper which was stretched on a purple cardboard frame. A woman across the table noticing my surprise explained that it was stencil-work.

Becoming thoroughly engrossed by my effort to make out the cards, I was startled when some one announced that it was past eleven o'clock. Two hours and a half had passed and I had addressed twenty-seven envelopes. With a pang of horror I realized that I could not distinguish the features of women less than ten feet away.

"Is this *Blank's Magazine*?" I demanded of the assistant manager. When she replied in the affirmative my indignation, goaded by fear of having permanently injured my eyes, frothed over. "All of my life—before I was born *Blank's Magazine* has been proclaiming its interest in women—its efforts to help working women. Here you not only underpay them but give work to destroy their eyes. Take your file."

Snatching my hat and coat I hurried from the building without waiting to put them on. Fortunately the cold air of the street brought me to my senses. Stepping again from the building—this time clothed in my right mind as well as my hat and coat—I took the newspaper from my pocket for the purpose of consulting the help-wanted column.

The sheet was a blurred mass of indistinct figures and lines. I could not make out a word. Thoroughly alarmed

I hurried back to my room. There deciding to wait until after the lunch-hour before consulting an oculist, I dropped down on the bed and buried my head in the pillow, determined not to give way to tears. The arrival of the expressman with Alice's trunk aroused me. It was nearly five o'clock and my sight had become normal.

That evening when Alice came from work she found our little table set for our first meal and our dinner ready to take up.

"You'll have to get out the knife you brought from home," I explained after her first gust of enthusiasm had subsided. "Sixty cents seemed about all we could spare this week for kitchen and dining-room furnishings."

"Sixty cents!" she cried. "I was just thinking these forks and spoons the real thing—things you brought from home."

"Two and a half cents each," was my reply as I set the pan of rice in the centre of the table. "For the present we'll have to serve ourselves directly from the cooking utensils."

"It will save dish-washing," she approved, as she took a chop from the pie-plate on which it had been broiled. "But where is the soup?"

"Soup! You don't mean that you expect both soup and meat for the same dinner?"

"Then why soup plates?"

Squaring my shoulders I sat up very proud.

"You can eat cereals out of a soup-plate, you can drink soup, when we have it, out of a soup-plate. Indeed you can do a lot of things with a soup-plate that would be utterly impossible with either a breakfast or a dinner plate."

"So you can," agreed Alice. "And it saves dish-washing."

While she washed up our dinner things I made an account-book of the paper in which our purchases had been

wrapped. From it, under date of November 14, 1916, I now copy:

Gas stove.....	.10	2 chops.....	.10
gas pipe.....	.10	½lb butter.....	.20
2 s. plates.....	.10	1pt milk.....	.07
2 cups.....	.10	1 cereal.....	.05
2 table spoons.....	.05	1 bread.....	.06
2 tea spoons.....	.05	5lbs sugar.....	.40
2 forks.....	.05	5lbs rice.....	.39
2 tins.....	.05	salt.....	.05
	—	4 bananas.....	.05
	60	6 apples.....	.05
	1.42		—
	—		1.42
	\$2.02		

The fruit was bought at a push-cart market, but all the other eatables at standard shops. In one particular we were fortunate. Being Southerners we preferred rice to white potatoes.

The following morning we were both out before the Metropolitan clock announced eight—Alice to walk to Jones Bros. while I hurried to look for a new job. Answering advertisements I called at six places before ten o'clock. At each place the applicants far outnumbered the positions to be filled. For one clerical position there were twenty-one applicants, an office wishing two addressers turned away thirty-seven. At a candy factory I found the entrance so jammed by women, all answering the advertisement, that a glance assured me it would be useless to wait my turn.

Journeying farther up-town I made my seventh call. It proved to be one of the largest publishing houses in the country and they advertised for both addressers and folders. My face must have expressed disappointment on learning from the manager that he had already taken on all he needed. As I started toward the door he called me back.

"That woman over there," he said, indicating a vacant chair, "was telephoned for. One of her children had come

home from school sick. If she doesn't come back in the morning and you are on time I'll give you her seat. Be sure to be here before eight o'clock."

Seven-thirty the next morning found me at the publishing house and true to his word the manager gave me the vacant chair. Although monotonous, folding, like addressing is not unpleasant work. Busy fingers did not prevent those women from talking and I soon heard a lot of gossip about several of my neighbors. The young woman across the table from me was the wife of a chauffeur. As she worked, she used her handkerchief from time to time to absorb tears that rolled over her baby-doll cheeks.

Her husband, so the whisper ran around, was in love with his employer. This woman, according to his wife, not only gave the chauffeur handsome presents, but held long conversations with him over the telephone the first thing in the morning and the last thing at night. Besides, she took him to the theatre with her and had him lunch and dine with her at obscure road-houses when they went alone for long drives into the country.

"How many children have you?" I asked the weeping woman.

She tossed her head scornfully and assured me and all in ear-shot that she hadn't any and never had intended to have any, thank God! Not she, to lose her shape for a child! Later on I remarked to an older woman who sat next to me that I didn't see why the chauffeur's wife should be so broken up—she called her husband a scoundrel and they had no children.

"A married woman hadn't ought to have to work," my neighbor reproved me. "Unless her husband is sick or misfortunate."

Evidently her opinion was shared by all my neighbors. This woman in perfect health, under thirty and whining, actually shedding tears because she had to work, had their

sympathy. Not that she was poorer or her condition in any way harder than their own, but for the single reason that she as a married woman had a right to be supported. While turning this idea over in my mind my attention was attracted by a ripple of pleased exclamations.

A slender old gentleman had entered the loft from the elevator and was passing along the aisle between the workers. The carnation in his buttonhole was not more spotlessly white than his hair and whiskers. From time to time when he would recognize a worker he would pause, shake hands, and exchange a few remarks. At the end of our table he greeted the woman in charge of the folders cordially, told her that he was glad to see her back and hoped that she would remain until the work was finished. When in reply to his question she assured him that everything, including the delivery of the bottled milk, was being done for the workers' comfort, he bowed to us all and passed on.

The last glimpse I had of him was among the men workers at the far end of the loft. He had stooped to pick up the crutch of a lame man, an old addresser who, I was told, did more than two thousand envelopes a day.

During the three days and a half that I worked for that firm I never heard so much as a whispered complaint against conditions. The loft in which we worked was well lighted and ventilated. Though the weather was bitterly cold it was always comfortably heated. The chairs were comfortable and the tables of a comfortable height. Though pens and ink and other supplies were never wasted, the workers were generously supplied.

On Saturday at one o'clock I was paid eight dollars. It seemed a huge amount compared to the six dollars I might have received had I continued at the department store.

Not having planned to have Polly spend her life addressing envelopes or folding circulars, Monday morning found

me again on the tramp, looking for a job. At three places I turned away without making my application known—having learned from experience that no business occupying a few small rooms has need of twoscore or more workers. The fourth place advertised for girls to count coupons. The woman manager expressed regret at having filled her last vacancy. Then she added:

“If you apply on the street floor, maybe Mr. Spencer will take you on. Tell him that Mrs. Linwood sent you.”

The street floor, to my eyes, had the appearance of a sort of general store—practically every article one could wish for was to be seen and attractively arranged. On finding Mr. Spencer I delivered Mrs. Linwood’s message.

“If you are willing to begin at seven dollars a week I can place you at once,” he told me.

Recalling that it was a dollar more than offered by the department store and, being in walking distance, would require no car-fare, I promptly accepted.

“Been to lunch?” Mr. Spencer inquired. “Better go now. Take your full hour. When you get back report to me.”

Halting on the other side of the street I looked up at the sign across the front of the building. What had appeared to me to be a general store was the chief premium station of a widely known company that claimed to do business on a profit-sharing basis. Reading the advertisements of this firm I had always set them down as a set of crooks catering to the American craving to get something for nothing.

So I had engaged to work for crooks!



## CHAPTER IV

### AGAINST A RUSH OF THE HERD

ON my return from lunch Mr. Spencer escorted me to a counter marked "Men's Department" and introduced me to the head of stock, Nora Joyce, a neat young girl with serious blue eyes. After introducing me to the other girls in the department Nora gave me the stand next to her own and set about explaining the work to me.

There were one hundred and fifty different kinds of articles behind that counter, all for masculine use. The value of each article was reckoned in certificates instead of dollars and cents. It takes five coupons to make a certificate and there are half-coupons and quarter-coupons.

It was all very confusing at first. Noting the dexterity with which the girls counted the little slips of paper, the ease with which they recognized each kind by its color, and calculated their value, seemed to me nothing short of marvellous. While Nora was at lunch and while I was immersed in a sample package of coupons, struggling to impress their color and value on my eyes and mind, I suddenly realized that some one on the other side of the counter was speaking to me. Glancing up, my eyes encountered those of my first customer.

"If you can spare the time," she said, with an accent on spare, "I would like a box of men's hose—black." She was an unusually handsome young woman and stunningly dressed.

On my asking what size she wished she stared at me as though I had made an impertinent inquiry.

"They are for my husband," she haughtily informed me, evidently expecting that to settle the matter. She could

not tell me the size of her husband's shoe, the size of his glove, what he weighed, nor his height. After many questions she finally divulged that he was not much shorter than she and that he was quite thin.

The price of that box of socks was seven hundred and fifty coupons. Imagine my feelings when that first customer of mine handed me one hundred coupons and the balance in quarter-coupons. And all the while I counted them she stood first on one foot, then on the other, sighed heavily, and in other ways made me aware of her great impatience. Before I was half through she stalked over to the manager's office and demanded to know how much longer she was to be kept waiting for her purchase.

A few minutes after she took her departure Mr. Spencer came across from his office with a little bench. It was the sixth of its kind behind our counter, and he placed it at my station.

"The management likes the girls to sit down when not waiting on customers," he explained to me. "Sit down as often as you can."

That evening at dinner, when describing my new position to Alice, I mentioned the incident of the little bench, and added:

"Crooks or honest folk, they are mighty pleasant to work with."

It was later that same night that the tragedy hovering over our quiet rooming-house first made itself heard. I must have been asleep for some time when I was suddenly awakened by a shriek. Listening breathlessly I almost imagined that I had dreamed. A second shriek ending in a moan! Jumping out of bed I ran across the room and looking out the window listened. The torch on the top of the Metropolitan tower made the back yards of that entire block as bright as day. Everything was quiet. There was not a living creature to be seen.

Slipping on my cloak I stepped into the hall. A young man was coming up the stairs.

"Did you hear a woman scream?" I asked.

"Just as I came in the front door," he told me. "I'm almost sure it came from this floor."

A woman whom I had never seen opened the door next mine.

"I'm the widow of a policeman," she informed the young man and me. "I advise you not to go running around a rooming-house at night when you think you hear somebody scream. I heard nobody scream and I'm a light sleeper. It was your loud talking before my door that waked me up."

She looked the man on the stairs over so fiercely that he hastened to give an account of himself—he was a reporter for a morning paper and seldom got in before three in the morning. On the slight foundation of that conversation the policeman's widow appointed herself chaperon-in-chief to Alice and me. Her name was Wilkins, and we soon learned that she was a trimmer of men's stiff hats.

Our circle of acquaintances broadened so rapidly that within a few days it included everybody rooming on the top floor. The first of the three front rooms was occupied by a man who kept a restaurant; next him lived a little woman who was organist in a near-by church; while in the third lived a slender young woman, unusually pretty, who was a milliner. In the front skylight room, companion to the one occupied by the reporter, lived a man who, according to Molly, the negro maid, had a walking-stick and a pair of shoes to match every pair of trousers.

After making a survey, as it were, of the inhabitants of our top floor, Mrs. Wilkins announced to Alice and me that she was convinced that the shrieks had come from the organist.

"Did you ever see one of 'em at it?" she asked one evening

when Alice and I were in her room being instructed in the art of stiff-hat trimming. "It's the hardest work ever I seen—playin' an organ. They pound with their fingers, stomp with their feet, and butt with their head—all at the same time. It's enough to give anybody nightmare—playin' an organ."

At the premium station as time wore on I learned the full significance of the dreaded Christmas rush. Every morning before the store opened the sidewalk was banked with people. As soon as the doors were unlocked they pushed in, trampling everything before them like a herd of cattle. It seemed to me that at least one-half of them always made straight for our counter.

There were whole days when I scarcely raised my eyes from the coupons I counted. Person after person was served without my so much as glancing at their faces. I had become a machine. My sole aim was to serve customers as fast as possible, and so lessen the crowd that packed the space in front of our counter.

And the team-work of the girls behind that counter! I never have seen it equalled. Never an impatient word nor an angry glance. Whenever a desired article was beyond the reach of the girl serving a customer some other girl would reach it for her. If a customer contested the count of his coupons—and they were continually doing so—the next saleswoman was always ready to change customers and verify or correct the count.

Don't imagine that the low money value of the certificates and coupons prevented such incidents. During the five weeks I served behind that counter there were scores of persons, men and women, and most of them well dressed, who disputed hotly over a half, or even a quarter, coupon. One such individual threatened to have me arrested if I did not "produce" a quarter-coupon which he claimed to have given me. He was buying a pipe the value of which

was two hundred certificates. In the soiled, crumpled mass of paper which he handed me he claimed was the exact number required. My count revealed only five hundred coupons, with one thousand nine hundred and ninety-nine quarter-coupons. I've often wondered what punishment a judge would mete out to a woman accused of hypothecating a half of a mill.

Of the seven saleswomen in our department—not counting myself—there were five Roman Catholics, one Protestant, and one Jewess. Church questions were not infrequently touched on in our conversation. One point on which they all agreed was that clergymen of all denominations were best described by a shrug of the shoulders.

One day feeling Nora's elbow on my ribs I glanced up from the coupons in my hand.

"That's my clergyman," she whispered. "Wait on 'im, please."

He proved to be pleasanter than I had expected after hearing all the girls behind the counter declaim against men of his cloth. He did become irritated when I refused to break a box of silk socks for him. When I explained that it was against the rules to deliver goods until after the coupons had been counted, he turned his back on me. He was so much better than some other customers who had fallen to my lot that I remonstrated with Nora for refusing to serve him.

"Oh, I know 'em!" she replied impatiently. "See how sleek and fat and selfish he is! Last week one of 'em came to our flat and worried mother until she gave him the money she'd been saving for more than six months to get herself a pair of thick shoes."

"Much he cared what she was saving for," the little Jewess chipped in. "My father keeps a butcher-shop, and whenever mother sees a rabbi coming she hides everything

except the toughest cuts. They only take the best, and want 'em for nothing."

"Ministers are like everybody else," the Protestant girl announced. "They've got to feather their own nests."

"What would your minister say to that?" I asked her.

"My minister!" she scoffed. "He don't know me from Adam's cat. He never speaks to nobody off Fifth Avenue."

For years I had heard persons, men and women, declaim against the incomprehensible devotion of "shop-girls" to chocolate éclairs and gum-drops. Indeed only a few days before quitting the National Arts Club I overheard a high-priced music teacher declare that she lost all patience with "shop-girls" when she saw them lunching on a chocolate éclair instead of a bowl of oatmeal and milk, or of "good, nourishing soup." My five weeks behind the counter furnished me with a proved solution to the problem.

The first time I tried lunching on a bowl of oatmeal and milk I began to experience a most uncomfortable sensation under my apron before three o'clock. By five that sensation had become a sharp griping pain. The day following I tried soup. In the middle of the afternoon when Nora learned how I was suffering, she went scurrying around among the girls in various departments and returned with three gum-drops, which she made me eat.

After that when I had ten cents or less to spend for lunch I invested in a chocolate éclair and gum-drops. Without a doubt such a diet does produce pale faces and a predisposition to tuberculosis. Experience taught me that it staves off the griping agony produced by hunger and standing on one's feet longer than any other food to be had in New York City for the same money. When a girl's wage is seven dollars a week, or less, ten cents a day is all she can spend for lunch.

At that time mothers on the lower East Side were rioting as a protest against the high price of milk and potatoes.

On the grocery floor of one of the largest department stores, where all foodstuffs were usually to be had at rock-bottom prices, onions were priced to me at thirty-nine cents the pound, white potatoes at twenty-seven, and butter at ninety-three. Three small bananas were offered and bought at twenty cents—a Saturday-night bargain.

Of course Alice and I could afford none of these luxuries. Having discovered black-eyed peas at ten cents a pound, and that a pound was enough for four dinners, we vied with each other in proclaiming our fondness for black-eyed peas. Another discovery was our mutual relish of peanut butter. We consumed it morning, noon, and night. As a substitute for meat we never found its equal.

During this time, on several occasions, I had been aroused by a repetition of that piercing shriek. Because no one else heard it I allowed Mrs. Wilkins and Alice to half-persuade me that it was a cat. Three times I got out of bed, and looking out my window tried to discover in the brilliantly lighted back yards the cat which could so exactly imitate a human being in agony.

About ten days before Christmas the entire population of our top floor, along with a good many roomers in other parts of the house, was aroused. The shrieks and groans came from the room of the young milliner. After pounding in vain on the milliner's door the organist ran downstairs and returned followed by the landlady with her bunch of pass-keys. After they entered the room we saw the restaurant-keeper hurry out. Later he returned with a bottle of whiskey. While all this took place Alice, the newspaperman, and I had been kept in our rooms under the stern guardianship of the policeman's widow.

"You don't know what you'll get mixed up in in a roomin'-house," she warned us. "For all you can tell all who goes in that room will be hauled into court as witnesses—maybe put in jail."

The next morning the little organist came to ask Alice and me to use our influence with Mrs. Brown, the landlady, to prevent her from forcing the milliner to leave the house.

"Mrs. Howard was in a sort of stupor last night when we got in her room," the organist told us, referring to the milliner. "She seemed to be suffering intensely, and didn't come round until she had taken a stiff drink of whiskey and I had rubbed her side. She only wants to stay until after Christmas; then she won't be so rushed with work and can look around for another room, but Mrs. Brown says she was drunk last night, and must get out."

Later, on my way to work, I stopped at the door of Mrs. Brown's room for the purpose of speaking to her about the milliner. Answering my knock she came to the door, her face wreathed in smiles. Without giving me time to open my lips, she exclaimed:

"I've just received a letter from Mrs. Houghton-Smith," she told me, mentioning the name of one of the most prominent women in New York. "She wants me to save her an hour this afternoon." Seeing that I did not understand, she added: "Mrs. Houghton-Smith has me read her vibrations before every one of her visits to Washington."

"Vibrations?" I questioned stupidly.

"Didn't you know that I discovered the vibration theory?" she demanded. "Yes, indeed. And when I first came to New York I held my circles in the drawing-rooms of the most exclusive people in the city. I'd be doing it now if my son wasn't such a fool."

She then informed me that Mrs. Houghton-Smith was such a firm believer in vibrations that she had tried to induce her, Mrs. Brown, to go to Washington and get President Wilson's vibrations. This Mrs. Brown refused to do, because, being of American Revolutionary stock, she felt it would not be well for any person to be in a position to control a President of the United States.



It all sounded like pure nonsense to me, but that afternoon on returning from work there was a limousine standing before the door. It was a noticeably handsome car. The chauffeur and footman were in livery. Judging by the brilliant lights in Mrs. Brown's rooms I was sure she had company.

Three evenings later Alice burst into my room while I was cooking our dinner.

"What on earth has Bernstorf been doing here?" she demanded. "I met him coming down the front steps."

"You mean the German ambassador?" I questioned.

"Exactly who I do mean. If ever I saw him I met him on the steps. He got in the taxi that was waiting at the curb, and turned up Fourth Avenue."

"Vibrations must be powerful," I remarked, "to attract such busy people as Mrs. Houghton-Smith and Count Bernstorf."

Explaining, I told Alice of my conversation with Mrs. Brown about vibrations. To both of us it seemed a huge joke, but when later the two incidents were reported to Mrs. Wilkins, she shook her head.

"Mrs. Brown was a fortune-teller," she assured us. "But she went under another name—something Italian, or French. My husband knew her when she kept her carriage and horses, and used to go out with swells."

On my way to work the following morning Mrs. Brown waylaid me on the stairs. She caught me by the sleeve and drew my ear down to the level of her lips.

"I've found it," she whispered jubilantly.

"Oh! I'm so glad!" I assured her, remembering that the one safe way to treat lunatics was to agree with all they said.

"I've been concentrating on it for months," she went on. "Mrs. Houghton-Smith is the only person whose current I have allowed to touch my own. I wouldn't have

taken even that risk if I hadn't needed her help. She has to take it to the President, you know."

Being a silent listener I learned that Mrs. Brown's discovery was nothing more nor less than a way to stop the war. Beyond the bare statement that it had something to do with Mexico, and that only President Wilson would be able to turn the trick, she would tell me nothing. In the midst of her talk she struck the banister sharply with her fist, and exclaimed:

"Just to think it might all have come to nothing! That villain Bernstorf came here last night. He asked for me by my other name, and the maid has orders never to let such callers in. He made her bring up his card—said Mrs. Houghton-Smith had given him my address. Had I seen him our currents would have come into such conflict that I might never have discovered the way to end the war."

Saturday before Christmas the crush in the premium station was so great that several times the doors were closed to keep more customers from crowding in. There was never a break in the crowd before our counter. More than once Mr. Spencer wedged his way through the packed humanity to tell us to keep our seats while waiting on customers. Then he turned to the waiting throng and called out:

"You people must have patience. I won't have my girls killing themselves."

When six o'clock came, though he had the doors closed promptly, there was such a crowd inside that it was well past seven before the station could be cleared. Even then he had to forbid the salespeople waiting on any more customers, and ordered us out from behind the counters.

On reaching my room I found Alice and Mrs. Wilkins waiting for me with my dinner nice and hot. On trying to explain my delay I found that I could not pronounce the words needed by my mind to express my thoughts. Intuitively, it would seem, Alice recognized what was the matter.

"Wait!" she cried, springing up. "Don't try to say a word. Get her undressed, Mrs. Wilkins. I'll be right back."

She dashed into her room and came racing back with two white pellets and a glass of cold water. As soon as I swallowed the pellets they put me to bed, and I imagine that as soon as my head touched the pillow I fell asleep.

On waking the next day I found Mrs. Wilkins standing over me with a bowl of hot milk. It was after two o'clock. Every time I opened my eyes during that afternoon either Mrs. Wilkins or Alice insisted on my eating something, which they always had ready.

Later Alice explained that she had suffered from a similar breakdown from overstudy during a college exam. The two white pellets were left over from that attack.

Two nights later the whole house was aroused by the milliner's shrieks. We learned that she had been suffering almost nightly, but because of timely care given by the restaurant-keeper and the organist, her attacks had been checked before becoming acute. Now it so happened that the restaurant man had been called out of town, and the little organist, fatigued by rehearsing her choir for Christmas, had not been aroused in time.

Recalling Mrs. Brown's threat to turn the girl out if she again disturbed her roomers, Alice and I stopped in to see the landlady on our way to work. We explained that the milliner only wished to remain until the Christmas rush in her trade was over. After that she would be able to return to her home in Vermont or find another room. The landlady was so stubborn that Alice was finally forced to use her trump card.

"My mother has ordered me to come home for Christmas—sent me a railroad ticket. I am leaving to-morrow immediately on leaving work. If you have really promised Mrs. Howard's room to another person, I'll ask her to use

my room until my return. I paid my rent yesterday, you remember."

Finding that we were both determined to see that the milliner got a square deal, Mrs. Brown agreed not to give her any more trouble, to allow her to remain until the end of the milliners' season.

That day a circular letter from the firm, addressed to their employees in the premium station, aroused the little Jewess.

"The owners!" she exclaimed. "It's always the owners. In the subway they've even got papers stuck on the windows, urging us to pay higher fares so that the owners can get bigger dividends. I'm tired working for the owners."

"Who is not?" Nora demanded.

"You said it!" the Protestant girl added.

Though most of the articles being sold at the premium station were for Christmas presents, there was not much talk of Christmas behind the counters. The day preceding the holiday one girl joyfully confided to us all that her mother had promised the family a turkey dinner.

"Turkey!" Nora exclaimed. Then she turned to me. "Groceries have gone up so that it takes all father and I can do to get the cheapest sorts of food for the children. Mother is a fine buyer, but we never have meat more than once a day. Then it is only stew or fish. I used to couldn't bear either, but you'll eat anything when you're real hungry and dog-tired."

Late that afternoon Mr. Spencer stopped at my end of the counter. He had been watching me, he said, and he liked the way I worked. If I wished to come back after Christmas he would be glad to give me a permanent position. Though I had never intended to remain longer than the holiday rush, his manner was so pleasant, so sincerely appreciative, that before I realized it I had promised to report the day after Christmas.

That evening, Christmas Eve, on returning from work I found a white sheet spread on the floor of the hall, just within the front door and by the side of the stairs. The lines into which the sheet had fallen struck me as peculiar, and I paused on the stairs and stared down at it. My eyes wandering farther made out the uniform of a policeman in the dusk of the rear hall.

"That's Mrs. Howard," the voice of the little organist told me as she developed from the shadow beyond the policeman. "She was taken sick while at work, this morning—they sent her home in a cab. When I got a doctor he said she must go at once to a hospital. She died as the stretcher-bearers were bringing her down the stairs. She has to remain here on the floor until the coroner comes."

"Heart trouble?" I asked.

"Yes. The doctor said it was brought on by overwork and underfeeding." The little organist's voice trembled, and she gulped down a sob as she added: "And on Christmas Eve, too!"

"And in a Christian country," I agreed. "In the richest city in the world."

That Christmas was the first holiday I ever really appreciated. Remaining in bed the entire day I subsisted on a loaf of stale bread and two specked apples, both left-overs of the hat-trimmer, who had gone to spend a week with her brother in Jersey.

During the second week in January Mr. Spencer again brought up the question of my becoming a regular saleswoman in the premium station. Nora thought he planned to make me head of stock at a near-by counter. Forced to give him a definite answer, I told him that conditions at my home made it necessary for me to leave New York—I would give up my job at the end of that week. On my telling him good-by he assured me that he would always have an opening for me whenever I chose to return.

Alice and the hat-trimmer were the only persons who knew that I had signed a contract with the Sea Foam Hotel, a large hotel at a well-known resort. I was to serve as waitress.

## CHAPTER V

### HUMAN COOTIES

WHEN planning my adventure as Polly Preston, the heroine of my proposed novel, the idea of including domestic service did not occur to me. It was Alice who first caused me to consider such an experience. Telling why she had given up her position in the institution for defective children, she had exclaimed:

"I was engaged as a teacher—the people at college all understood I was to have a teacher's position. After they got me there they treated me like a servant."

Thinking over this incident, I wondered how it felt to be treated as a servant. Were well-bred people really so disagreeable to those who served them? How had the servants at home looked upon our household? Was it possible that they found fault with my mother's treatment of them? If so, in what particular had she failed?

These thoughts called to mind words of the late Franklin B. Sanborn when recounting to me his recollections of Louisa M. Alcott. It was near the end of a perfect October day spent rambling about Concord with Mr. Sanborn as my escort. After spending some time in the School of Philosophy we crossed to the Alcott house and, going upstairs, took our seats near the window at which Miss Alcott sat when writing "Little Women." Mr. Sanborn had been talking continuously for several minutes when suddenly he stopped and sat looking thoughtfully out of the window.

"Louisa was wonderful!" he exclaimed, beginning to talk as suddenly as he had stopped. "Yes, she was wonderful. Even to the last she was as ready to experiment

as she had been when a young girl." He paused for an instant, then added in a different tone: "It was that that caused her to try going out as a domestic servant." He shook his head. "It was a mistake. It was a mistake. Even Louisa couldn't stand that."

Now recalling these words, I wondered what it was that even Louisa could not stand. Louisa, the woman whom Mr. Sanborn had described as wonderful, with a heart overflowing with love and human kindness. What was it that even such a woman could not stand?

Thinking of the women and girls with whom I had worked, I wondered why some of them who appeared so sensible should persist in a struggle to eke out a half-starved existence on such low wages when in domestic service they would get all the comforts of a good home along with wages. All my life I had heard persons, experienced men and women, protesting against this condition. Some of them had gone so far as to assert that there should be laws prohibiting women and girls from working in shops and factories—so forcing them into domestic service.

Once while working in the premium station I attempted to discuss the subject with Nora.

"Not that!" the girl cried, the lines in her forehead contracting into little knots. "I'll go to the river first."

Nora was a sensible girl. Why should she feel like that? She helped her mother with the work of their little flat. She washed her own clothes and on Sunday enjoyed cooking dinner. She made many of her own clothes and helped sew for her younger brothers and sisters. She looked forward to the time when the young man to whom she was engaged would earn enough for them to marry. She expected to do her own housework. Then why should she object, and so passionately, to doing housework for which she was paid, to becoming a domestic servant?

The problem haunted me for weeks. During that period



every time I looked over the help-wanted columns of certain papers I saw that Sea Foam Hotel was in need of chambermaids and waitresses. Not until I had mailed my letter applying for a position as chambermaid did I mention it to Alice and Mrs. Wilkins.

The expression of horror that sprang into Alice's eyes was somewhat moderated when the hat-trimmer expressed her satisfaction. She declared it would be the very best thing Alice and I could do—both go to the seashore as hotel help. What could we save on seven and eight dollars a week? She by sitting up evenings to make the little bows used on the inside of men's stiff hats, in addition to regular nine hours a day six days a week, was only able to get twelve dollars a week.

Then gouging down in her stocking she drew out a roll of bills.

"There!" she said, throwing the money into my lap. "You can count it yourself. I've been workin' since the middle of September—nearly four months—and that's all I've saved. You know how plain I eat and I ain't spent as much as ten dollars for clothes. Count it."

Eleven one-dollar bills.

"The only time I can save money," she went on, "is durin' the summer I works in the linen-room of a hotel down on Coney Island. The eatin' is somethin' grand. Because there ain't room enough in the hotel for us linen-room girls they allows us three dollars a week extra. Last summer I and another girl got a room for fifteen dollars a month. Besides savin' our wages we both had somethin' left of our room money."

The elaborate prospectus—"Information for Waitresses," it was headed—described in such glowing terms the many advantages provided for the help of the Sea Foam that Mrs. Wilkins all but threw up her hat-trimming job to go with me.

"It must be grand!" she exclaimed. "To get such good things to eat all the year round as they give us at Coney in the summer. Sure, you'll get it at that hotel! That place is sweller than Coney. An' your tips will be bigger, too."

When I called her attention to the statement that waitresses serving in the side halls received sixteen dollars a month while those serving in the main dining-room only got thirteen she urged me to "sign up" for a side hall job. Side hall she assured me meant a piazza glassed in or a sun parlor.

"Them's the places real swells like to eat in so they can see things whilst they're eatin'," she insisted. "They'll be further from the kitchen and serving-room, but you'll get bigger tips. Better 'sign up' for the job in the side hall."

And she talked so much about the grand food supplied by the Coney Island hotel and the grander food that I was sure to get at the Sea Foam that I used to dream about it. For, though Alice and I were not actually starving, we had suppressed our craving for food to such an extent that passing a bake-shop or a restaurant caused an unpleasant sensation. I had gone off seventeen pounds in weight, and Alice was so thin that she didn't dare get on the scales.

When buying my ticket I learned that the rates quoted by the prospectus had been out of date more than five years. On arriving at Belgrave House, the waitresses' dormitory, I mentioned to the housekeeper as she registered me that I wished to buy one of the black and one of the white uniforms, also mentioned in the prospectus as being supplied at wholesale prices. She showed considerable embarrassment. Waitresses, she explained, had not liked the cut of the skirts, so there was not a full line on hand.

Those skirts! They were of that period when the hour-glass was the model of feminine grace and elegance. The

largest waist measure in stock was nineteen inches. That skirt was forty-four inches long and measured more than six yards around the bottom. Having to go on duty within three hours, I was forced to get something in the way of a uniform. Fortunately, on a pinch, I can cut and sew. Buying a black and a white skirt—dimensions, nineteen by forty-four inches by six yards—I set to work.

After shortening the white skirt and making it wider at the top and narrower at the bottom I rushed to the boardwalk, where I bought a white and a black shirtwaist.

Of course, they cost me three times as much as they were selling for in New York.

The waitresses' dinner was in progress when I presented myself in my uniform. The assistant housekeeper of Belgrave being at the desk, she conducted me into the large, poorly lighted dining-room and found me a vacant chair at a table for eight. During the meal, when the waitress next me cordially offered her help, I asked if she was stationed in the main dining-room or the side-hall. After saying she was in the main dining-room she shut up like a clam. Every effort to learn where and what the side-hall was met an unmistakable rebuff. Puzzled, and a little bit miffed, I at length said to the waitress who had offered me her assistance:

"You'll be helping me a lot if you will tell me what to do to get a good station." Then, including all at table, for I knew they were all listening, I added: "You see, this is my first time in a hotel. I've always worked in a private family. Please tell me what to do."

"Follow along with us when we report for dinner, take your seat in the back of the dining-room, and wait till the head waiter comes," she told me.

"When the head waiter sees you sitting there he'll know you're new and give you a station," another waitress added. "You just follow along with us."

Following these directions took me through a covered passageway connecting Belgrave with the Sea Foam. From this we entered a large kitchen which, on my first entrance, seemed thronged with men—black and white. From the kitchen we went down a long flight of unusually steep stairs to a basement passageway in which I got my first glimpse of a time-clock. After punching her time the waitress who had spoken to me at dinner signalled for me to follow her.

“That is the side-hall dining-room,” she told me, indicating a large basement room, rudely equipped with tables and chairs. “It’s where the office help, housekeepers, and linen-room girls eat.” We turned and were going back up the steep stairs when she asked: “Did you notice that the assistant housekeeper of Belgrave is lame?”

“She’s so lame that she can hardly walk,” I exclaimed. “I had to notice it.”

“She served in the side-hall,” the girl told me, still speaking half under her breath. “She fell down these steps with a loaded tray and was in the hospital for more than a year. She’s got her position for life. The Sea Foam has to take care of her.”

From the kitchen we passed through a long serving-room and from that we entered the Sea Foam dining-room. It was a spacious one with rows of very broad windows on four sides, those on three sides giving a splendid view of the ocean. The walls, woodwork, and the slender pillars supporting the ceiling were white enamel. There was a long strip of blue-gray velvet carpet extending from the door the entire length of the room. The steam-radiators, which almost encircled the room, were so brilliantly gilded that I almost imagined them covered with gold-leaf.

At dinner I was stationed at a table of six covers. My guests, I soon learned, were the family of a multimillionaire

—wife, three small children, their French governess, and a trained nurse. For the first three meals I worked under the supervision of Anna, a waitress who had been in the Sea Foam for more than six months. One of her first instructions was:

“Don’t pay no attention to her,” indicating the millionaire’s wife. “She’ll work your head off and won’t give you so much as a thank-you.”

This family took their meals in two sections—the children with the governess and nurse, the mother alone. At the first dinner I served without the assistance of Anna the mistress of millions wrote her order as follows:

“Two portions of oysters on the half shell, two portions of olives, two portions of asparagus, two portions of the heart of lettuce without dressing, two portions of fried oysters, eight portions of the heart of celery, six portions of radishes, two portions of apples, two portions crystalized ginger, two cups of hot chocolate, two portions of crackers, two portions of cheese, two portions of squabs, two portions of green peas, two portions of queen fritters, two portions of chocolate ice-cream, and two portions of cake.”

She ordered me to bring it all in on the same tray, as she did not wish to be kept waiting. When one recalls the weight of hotel china and the custom of covering each dish with one a size smaller, the physical impossibility of obeying this order will be understood. Following Anna’s instructions, I “paid no attention” to the millionaire’s wife. It required three trays as heavy as I could lift to get her dinner in to her.

Each time I returned from the kitchen I found her in the act of trying to complain to the assistant head waiter. She grumbled at me because I did not stand behind her chair and put the dishes before her as fast as she wanted them. Of course, she did not eat all she ordered. She

only cut a bit from the breast of both squabs, selected the oysters that suited her fancy, nibbled at the innermost hearts of the lettuce and the celery. What her dinner really amounted to was rendering unfit for use food which would have fed six hungry women. The ginger and the fruit she carried away in her work-bag.

Had this woman been coarse or ordinary in appearance I might have felt sorry for her lack of breeding. She was quite the reverse. She was small, with a piquantly pretty face and a pretty plump figure. She knew how to dress—wore beautiful clothes at the right times and painted her cheeks and lips only in the evening. Her hands, though not beautiful in shape, were exquisitely kept; all of her numerous rings were handsome. She seldom wore more than two besides her wedding-ring, and they were always appropriate.

The cause of her ill-breeding was her selfishness. She was determined to get all that was coming to her and could not tolerate any person from whom she could gain nothing. She was a typical daughter of a horse-leech—however much she had she must still cry "Give."

At the end of my first week practically all the waitresses urged me to ask the head waiter to give me another station. A waitress, they assured me, was never expected to serve longer than one week at a table where tips were not given. As kindly as this advice was intended it did not happen to suit my case—not exactly. Never again, in human probability, I reasoned, would so good an opportunity to study this type of American come my way.

The millionaire paid two visits to his family while I was serving them. During each visit he took five meals. A Sunday dinner when he and his wife ate alone is memorable. After ordering practically everything on the menu, and just as I imagined them ready to leave the table, he turned on me and demanded white potatoes. He said that he had

ordered mashed potatoes and that I had failed to bring them. His attack was so unexpected that I was dumb. Not so Anna.

Crossing to the table she pulled a platter from among the pile of soiled dishes surrounding his plate and held it out to him.

"There's your white potatoes," she told him. "You done eat 'em."

Several days before Easter this family departed. I had served them three hundred and seventy-nine elaborate meals, been found fault with, rudely ordered about, grumbled at, and might have been reprimanded by the head waiter had he not, having learned that no tips were to be expected, studiously kept away from their table. My tip was a soiled one-dollar bill ungraciously given. It was one hundred cents more than any of their former waitresses had received, and they had been stopping in the hotel for more than four months.

The family occupied five of the most expensive rooms in the hotel and monopolized the services of two chambermaids and a scrubwoman. There was not a week while I was serving them that the wife did not make at least one trip to one of the neighboring cities. On her return she invariably boasted to any waitress who would listen of the amount of money she had spent and the expensive clothes she had bought. At one dinner she wore a wonderful evening gown, for which she stated she had paid twenty-five hundred dollars.

Knowing the wages paid to working women in New York at that time, I wondered what per cent of that sum had reached the women who had made the gown. What was their weekly wage?

It was not, however, the conduct of this family of millionaires that convinced me before I had been a week at the Sea Foam that domestic service is very different from

what I had imagined. In the first place I had always assumed that hotel waiters had the same food as the guests, certainly what was left over. Such, I was assured by the head waiter and the steward, is the custom only in "cheap joints." At the Sea Foam, if a waitress ate so much as a mouthful of food left by a guest she was discharged in disgrace.

Our food—that is, the food prepared in the kitchen of Belgrave House—was the worst I have ever tried to swallow. During my second week, the breakfast being more uneatable than usual, I complained to Mary, my roommate. Mary was scrubwoman and maid of all work in the Belgrave kitchen. I asked her why, if they were going to send us scraps of meat over from the Sea Foam, it was not properly cooked?

She assured me that the only food sent from the hotel were the meals for the Belgrave housekeeper. In proof of this she took me down to the kitchen of the dormitory and showed me the box of sliced bacon from which what I had called "meat scraps" had been taken. It was the best grade.

Mary explained that the cook had emptied half of the contents of a box into a huge pan and put it over the fire. To keep it from burning he stirred it around from time to time, then ladled the mass into dishes and sent it into the dining-room. That bacon is a fair sample of the food served in the waitresses' dining-room while I worked at the Sea Foam.

What the consequences might have been had the waitresses been supplied with sufficient amount of palatable food may be questioned. As to what actually happened there can be no doubt. "Dog tired" from overwork and a lack of food, a large majority of the waitresses hurried to the seashore immediately on leaving the dining-room after dinner. Often this was after nine o'clock at night.



Their first trip was taken in search of food. Accompanied by two of my fellow waitresses, I made such a trip the night after my arrival. Twenty men, in groups of two or more, invited us to eat with them. It is a question easily settled when a girl has money, but when she has no money and is hungry, what then? This is no abnormal appetite created by sea air. It is hard work and lack of food at our regular meals.

Another of my misapprehensions. I had fancied that the duty of a waiter or a waitress was to serve food, three meals a day. Time between meals I assumed they were free to use as they pleased.

When on regular duty a waitress at the Sea Foam reports for breakfast not later than a quarter before seven. To do this I had to rise at five forty-five. In that hour I had to take my bath, dress, make my bed, straighten up my room, eat my breakfast, punch the time-clock in the basement of the hotel, and get in the dining-room before the time mentioned. If so much as a fraction of a second late the door was bolted against me.

Though breakfast was supposed to end at nine, a waitress seldom, almost never, got rid of her guests until a half-hour later. Then came the collection of used napkins and table-cloths and exchanging them for fresh ones. Next the washing and polishing of silver and glass, the cleaning and filling of sugar-bowls, water-bottles, salt-shakers, pepper-shakers, vinegar-cruets, oil-bottle, and, last though by no means least, the arranging of cut flowers. After this was all accomplished to the satisfaction of the head waiter or his assistant the chairs, side-tables, radiators, and all the woodwork in the dining-room had to be gone over with a damp cloth. Then came the setting of the tables, leaving them ready for the next meal. It was seldom we got through this morning work before eleven.

Between that time and twelve-fifty there was always

more than enough personal work to be done—washing and ironing one's clothes, polishing one's shoes, mending, and the thousand and one little odds and ends that must be promptly attended to if a waitress is to appear well groomed.

The prospectus sent me before I left New York distinctly stated that the laundry of waitresses was done by the hotel free of charge. When I inquired about sending my clothes to the hotel laundry all the waitresses shook their heads. I might take the risk if I had a mind, they told me, but so far as their experience went garments were seldom returned, never in as good condition as when sent out. On learning that the two waitresses who had been in the employ of the Sea Foam for more than one year both did their own laundry, I decided to follow their example.

Lunch and dinner at the Sea Foam were like breakfast—long-drawn-out meals. A waitress seldom got rid of her guests under a half-hour after the dining-room closed, and often it was a full hour.

When on "early watch" a waitress had to be in the hotel dining-room not later than six in the morning. This is for the convenience of guests leaving by early train. "Late watch" means remaining until midnight to serve guests arriving on late trains or those who, after a promenade along the shore, felt the need of an extra meal. Being on watch does not curtail in any particular the regular duties of a waitress.

On one such occasion my diary reads: "April 2, 1917. Went on watch at 5.58 A. M., served four early breakfasts and reset tables. Return Belgrave at 6.46 and ate my breakfast. Back in dining-room at 6.57. Put water, ice, and menus on my table. The family of the multimillionaire having left the night before, the assistant head waiter gave me three two-seaters nearer the dining-room door. I set up these tables and served six breakfasts. Returned to Belgrave at 11.32. Ironed two aprons, a white skirt, a

petticoat, and two collar-and-cuff sets. Ate my lunch and was back in the dining-room at 12.57. Served seven lunches and then held open the dining-room door for fifty-two minutes that late guests might pass out. Rolled the carpet, set up my tables and returned to Belgrave at 4.15. Rested nearly a half-hour, then pressed my black waist, took a bath, went to a store on the corner for some peanut butter and crackers. Ate dinner and returned to the hotel dining-room at 6.07. Served eight dinners and went off duty at 8.56."

Do not forget that at the Sea Foam it is not considered good form to employ bus boys. A waitress not only brings in all food but she must carry out all dishes and wash, polish, dry, and bring back to the dining-room all china, glass, and silver used on her tables.

My diary for the following day, April 3, reads: "Yesterday was a memorable day in the history of our country—perhaps of the world—President Wilson asked Congress to declare that a state of war exists between the United States and Germany. Excepting myself I believe every waitress in the Sea Foam has written either to the secretary of war or direct to the President offering her services. So far as the six persons at my tables are concerned only the little boy from Wilmington, Delaware, has shown any interest in the matter. He came in a half-hour ahead of his mother this morning and spent the time talking to me about our preparedness, etc. He's a dear little chap."

Only lack of money kept me at Sea Foam. Before the end of my second week I had learned more than enough to understand why women and girls prefer to eke out an existence on the meagre wage received in shops and factories rather than enjoy the "home comforts" offered by domestic service. Only the experience of Beulah, a dear little girl from Canada, prevented me from giving up my job and returning to New York.

Beulah, whose season in Bermuda had been cut short by the war, came to Sea Foam on a three weeks' contract. Through a waitress friend she received an offer of a permanent position in a hotel near New York City. Though it was ten days before Easter and gave the head waiter ample time to fill her place, he not only refused to pay the wage due her but threatened to have her black-listed in hotel employment bureaus. In order to reach her new position Beulah was forced to borrow money to pay her railroad fare.

Not wishing to write and borrow money of Alice to pay my way back to New York, I determined to get myself discharged. How to accomplish this without doing anything rude or disorderly became my problem. When, a few days before Easter, the assistant housekeeper of the Belgrave confided to me that the head waiter had confided to her his intention of giving me a year's contract, perhaps making me a "captain," I gritted my teeth. Determined not to borrow of Alice, I was equally as determined not to remain to the end of my contract.

The day before Easter I was put on early watch for the second time. As waitresses are supposed to take turns at watch duty, believing that my opportunity for getting myself discharged had come, I hurried to the head waiter. He listened to my complaint against his assistant and then explained that he had suggested my being put on watch because there were so many new waitresses who could not be trusted to "swing the job."

"You've got a head on your shoulders," he informed me. "The management has decided to keep you on after Easter. That's the reason I'm pushing you forward—to get you promoted."

Easter morning found the head waiter and his assistant so nervous that they reminded me of ill-conditioned sheep-dogs snapping and snarling at each and every member of

their flock. A few minutes after the dining-room door opened for breakfast, just when the earliest guests began to trickle in, the first of a veritable avalanche of potted plants and cut flowers were brought in. Certain guests, wishing their tables to be especially attractive, had ordered these flowers and plants added to the abundant supply already provided by the hotel.

So, after getting rid of our breakfast guests, in addition to our routine work we waitresses had to put those plants and flowers on the tables indicated, and make them look as presentable as possible. This was far from an easy task, for in most cases the plants and flowers had been chosen because of their beauty and utterly regardless of the size or the shape of the table to be decorated. It was twenty-six minutes after twelve when I left that dining-room, and several waitresses were still struggling with their overabundance of cut flowers and potted plants.

Having changed my uniform and swallowed a few morsels in the way of lunch, I was back in the dining-room at twelve thirty-seven. When the doors opened, the occupants of my three tables, instead of being among the early diners as they had all promised, were all late. Anna, whose station was next mine, was unfortunate in the opposite direction—her guests, four at one table and two at the other, all arrived at the same time.

For the sake of helping Anna I took the order of the guests at her two-seater—a German-American and his American wife, the most perfect example of a rooster-pecked woman I have ever seen. On returning from the kitchen with the second course for this couple, I found all my guests in their seats. After serving the course on my tray I went to the assistant head waiter, explained to him that Anna needed assistance, and turned over to him the order of the German-American. Then, returning to my station, I took one orders of my own people.

At that time, on a bench at the back of the dining-room, there were seated, waiting to be called on, nine extra waitresses who had been brought on from a near-by city that morning. When instructing the regular waitresses that morning the head waiter had ordered us to report to himself or his assistant when any of us needed the help of these girls. Naturally I expected the assistant head waiter to send one of them to finish serving the guests at Anna's two-seater.

On returning with my tray laden with the first course for my six guests I found Anna's station in an uproar. The German-American, having seen me take the orders of my regular guests, had complained so loudly that the head waiter had to be called from the front of the dining-room to straighten matters out. Catching sight of me on my return from the kitchen, the hyphenated citizen again persisted in his demand to have "that one with hair" finish serving his table. The head waiter, who was really a very good sort, firmly insisted that he must either accept the services of the extra waitress or wait and take his turn with Anna.

On my way back to the kitchen the assistant head waiter met me. He was on the carpet and I in the aisle next the wall.

"This is the last meal you'll serve for me," he called across the double line of tables to me, throwing up his arms in a nervous way he had.

"I accept my discharge," I replied, realizing in a flash the opportunity for which I had been looking.

In the serving-room and kitchen I scattered the news broadcast, telling every one with whom I came in speaking distance that the assistant head waiter had discharged me. The steward assured me that it was all a mistake. The assistant head waiter was under a great strain, he explained, and very nervous. He tried to get me to promise

not to notice the incident and to report as usual in the dining-room for supper.

Two of my guests who overheard me tell Anna offered to take the matter up with the manager of the hotel if the head waiter refused to keep me on. This frightened me stiff. Ten days more at the Sea Foam was more than I could look forward to with equanimity. There was genuine pathos in my voice when I begged them not to interfere.

My description of my discharge so affected Mary, my roommate, that she insisted on taking me for an outing. In fact, nothing but my positive refusal to get into a wheel-chair prevented her from indulging in that extravagant attention. Truthfully assuring her that it would be much more enjoyable to sit and watch the crowd, we found comfortable seats under a pavilion and there spent the afternoon.

Perhaps it was the weather, or maybe the reaction following the emotional elation caused by the incident of my discharge. Whatever the reason, I have never before or since experienced such a virulent attack of discouragement as I did while watching that moving throng. Not for myself alone, but for the human race. While watching the people passing in front of us—two steady streams of walkers with two packed lines of wheel-chairs between—I suddenly realized them as an endless succession of pygmies.

Not one of them nor all of them could stop the incoming nor the outgoing of the sea that over the beach had the look of dirty bilge-water as creeping in higher and higher it slapped the sand. Nor could one of them nor all of them sweep aside the mist that like a dingy white curtain cut off our view of the ocean and rendered indistinct the end of the boardwalk.

What were they trying to do, these pygmies? For what were they struggling? Here they were tramping futilely up and down the shore, working hard to digest the food with

which they had just stuffed themselves—while in the rear of the hotels I knew there were ten times as many working even harder to get food to support life.

What did it all mean—this endless, unceasing struggle between human cooties and human drudges? What did it all amount to—the lives of these pygmies? Where had they come from? Where were they going? What were they trying to do?

Then, my thoughts turning inward, I demanded of myself:

“What are you trying to do? Granting that these pygmies crawling along the beaches are human cooties and those working in the hotels are human drudges, what then? The cooties are no more to blame for our economic system than the drudges. You’ve been a human cooty and you know that you did not give any more thought to the human drudges who slaved for your comfort than these people do to you. Remember the time you stopped at the Ardale-Stratton? Spent money like water.”

Thus reminded of my first visit to this resort, my mind slipped back more than ten years. I had come down from New York City under the chaperonage of one of the most distinguished women in the country. We planned to remain two weeks. Before the end of that time she had been taken seriously ill, and, though her own relatives and friends left her and returned to their homes, I remained. Bored by the monotony of hotel life, with the knowledge of spending too much money perpetually nagging at my consciousness, I dreaded to leave the old lady among strangers and attended only by her maid. Our visit stretched from two weeks to five months. Day after day I had loafed along the beach, watching the water—the threatening, the greedy, the sullen, the laughing, the beautiful, the peaceful, the soothing sea.

With a throb of pride I recalled that every Sunday morn-



ing during that tedious visit I had tipped my waiter and chambermaid one dollar each. Though I recalled that the service they gave me was always the best, I could not remember the name of either. Were they to meet me face to face I would not be conscious of ever having seen them before. I had never realized them as fellow human beings. I had never considered their convenience. I had never considered their feelings. In extenuation I told myself that it was because I had not understood.

“Neither do the persons with whom you are now finding fault understand,” my conscience flashed back at me. “Yet you call them human cooties—criticise their lack of purpose. What do you think you will accomplish, sitting out here with a kitchen-maid? You had better take your own advice to heart—get back where you belong and take care of yourself. You never planned to have Polly Preston become a domestic servant. Go back where you belong.”

Yawning, I rose to my feet. It seemed the sensible thing to do—to tell Mary that I was going for a walk and she must not wait for me. During Easter there was certain to be a number of my acquaintances at the Ardale-Stratton. I had only to register or send my visiting-card to the proprietor to get the best that the hotel had to offer. Telegraphing for my trunks and writing Alice that I had gotten all the first-hand material needed for my novel were simple details.

Before speaking to Mary, and while still yawning, my eyes wandered out to sea. The wind had blown a hole in the mist. Across this opening in the foreground there was steaming a black-gray dreadnought, its three funnels belching black-gray smoke. My country was at war and I had forgotten it!

As the battleship disappeared behind the bank of mist that formed the westerly frame of the picture in the far

corner, in the background three slender spars of a schooner-rigged sailing-vessel crept into view. Her hull seemed a black cord above the silvery sea, and her stretch of canvas, low down, appeared hardly larger than my thumbnail.

"The new and the old!" I exclaimed, comparing the majestic power of the dreadnought with the struggling sailing-ship.

Every drop of blood in your veins crossed the Atlantic in a vessel no larger and in all human probabilities no more seaworthy than that schooner, my thoughts ran on. What voyages those must have been! Storms! Shipwrecks! What men and what women!—French Huguenot, English, Welsh, and Scot.

Standing there under the pavilion with my eyes fastened on the struggling ship, I fell to musing about those ancestors of mine—how they had struggled against all the forces of nature to conquer a wilderness inhabited by savages; how, after conquering that wilderness, they had wrenched their new homes free from the mother country. And with a start of amazement I considered their reason, why they had dared all, suffered all—to found a government under which every child might be born free and equal.

Free and equal! What did that mean? What had those wonderful old men and women planned?

I looked down at Mary. And across my mind there swept stories of the man from whom my Welsh strain sprung. After serving as governor of the colony he had enlisted in the Continental army as a private. Though his son-in-law, one generation nearer me, had become one of Washington's major-generals—a private the old Welshman persisted in remaining to the end of the Revolution.

Hot blood crept up into my face until my cheeks burned and my ears tingled. Who was I, what had I accomplished,

that gave me the right to turn up my nose at associating with a kitchen-maid? I slipped back into the seat beside Mary.

What had I done? What was I doing to carry on the high resolves of this old Welshman and the rest of my hard-fighting, high-thinking ancestors? If I could not go to the front and fight to carry on the ideals of the country they had founded I could at least try to bring about an understanding of conditions at home—conditions caused by the ever-increasing struggle between human cooties and human drudges—a struggle which appears to me now as I write to threaten a greater disaster than that of the World War!

Turning to the woman at my side, I asked:

“Mary, didn’t you say that your cousin planned to give up her position as head chambermaid with a wealthy family in Pennsylvania?”

“She give notice more’n three months ago,” my roommate assured me, eager to get me to talk. “If the house-keeper wasn’t so mortal hard to please Jennie’d be married and livin’ in her own home. The man she’s goin’ to marry owns his own farm and lives real well.” And Mary rambled off, giving a minute description of her cousin’s future husband and home.

On our way back to the Belgrave after helping Mary compose a night-letter to her cousin I sent a telegram to Alice announcing that I would return the next day to New York. That evening on their return from work in the Sea Foam my fellow waitresses gave me a farewell entertainment.

And it was a real entertainment, for several of the girls had good natural voices and an ear for music. It will be a long time before memories of “I’d Give My Crown for an Irish Stew,” as sung by laughter-loving Mollie, fades

from my mind. One young waitress seemed to me as good a clog-dancer as I had seen on the stage. She had picked up the steps at a minstrel show—one attendance. What was still more surprising to me was that every one of them could do something in the way of playing the piano. Only one of them had ever taken lessons.

Though I thoroughly enjoyed that evening I do not believe that in my whole life I ever felt so diffidently self-conscious. The realization of yourself as the only hypocrite among honest folk is not pleasant. These girls were all genuinely sorry for me, for my being discharged. Each one had contributed her mite to pay for the bunch of flowers presented to me at the end of the evening. I felt like a thief.

The next morning when I applied at the hotel office for the wage due me, the paymaster gave me a receipt to sign. He had computed the amount at the rate of thirteen dollars a month.

“According to my contract I was to be paid at the rate of sixteen dollars a month,” I reminded him, returning the paper unsigned.

“You are not working in the side-hall,” he snapped back at me.

“I went where I was sent,” I told him. “The head waiter stationed me in the dining-room. Since the hotel required me to sign a contract I shall require the hotel to live up to that contract.”

Being accustomed to handling uneducated women this man fancied that all he had to do to intimidate me was to talk loud. When he paused in his shouting I repeated my first statement—the hotel must live up to its contract with me. After a second bout at loud talking the stenographer came to his assistance. She assured me “as a friend” that I had best take the amount offered me, as it was all that I

would get. Besides I had no copy of the contract I claimed to have signed.

She gasped on being assured that I did have a second copy of the contract—the copy Mrs. Wilkins had sent for. Taking another tack, this girl reminded me that the difference between sixteen and thirteen was too small to dispute about. Whereupon I inquired why the hotel was unwilling to pay it.

Declaring that nothing could be done until my contract was found, both the stenographer and the paymaster went back to their work. After waiting thirty minutes by the clock I again asked for my wages. The paymaster informed me that my contract had not been found and that I would have to wait till they had time to look for it. At the end of the second thirty minutes, and seeing that no effort was being made to get the contract, I remarked that perhaps it might be just as well for me to call on the clerk of the district court while waiting.

Simple as that statement may seem, it had a surprising effect on the paymaster. Hurrying to the door of his enclosure he urged me to enter, sit down, and wait for the manager. The manager, he assured me, kept all contracts locked in a safe of which he alone knew the combination. On my persisting he followed me along the passageway, begging me "as a friend" to have a little patience. Another odd feature of the performance was that the housekeeper of the Belgrave, though she had held the position for more than ten years, could not direct me to the city hall.

Once on the streets every passer-by was able to point out the city hall and tell me in just which corner I would find the clerk of court. This man was or pretended to be as ignorant of Sea Foam as the housekeeper had been of his whereabouts. When I first stated my case he had some difficulty

in recalling that there was such a hotel in the place—it is one of the best known thereabouts and less than five blocks from his office. His negro man of all work was so well informed that he was able not only to locate it exactly but to give the names of the stockholders.

The clerk of court, when warning me against “invoking the law” for such a small sum, informed me:

“The judge is all right, of course, but when it comes to a case against one of our large hotels there’s never any telling which way the cat will jump. I strongly advise you to go back to the hotel and see the manager. Maybe they will have found your contract and will be willing to pay you at the rate of sixteen a month.” Then he added, as he handed me his card: “I wouldn’t be surprised you’d find them with the money all counted out ready for you.”

“Neither would I,” I answered, keeping tight hold on the muscles of my face to prevent myself from returning his smile.

And it proved even as he said. Not only was the money ready for me but the paymaster’s manner had undergone a complete change. Telling me that the manager wished to speak to me, he held open the office-door and politely ushered me in.

The manager of the Sea Foam is, or was at that time, a square-built man with red hair. As we stared at each other across the broad top of his mahogany office-table our eyes were on a level. It was quite evident that he expected to stare me out of countenance. He made a mistake. His eyes were the first to give way.

“Won’t you sit down?” he said, motioning to a chair.

“Thank you. I have neither the time nor the inclination,” I told him. “What is it you wish to say to me?”

"To ask you why you went to the clerk of court."

"To prove to the Sea Foam waitresses that they can force the hotel to live up to its contracts."

Then I told him of the way little Beulah had been treated. He listened as though hearing of such an incident for the first time. Judging by what I had heard, it had been the policy of the hotel toward waitresses for years.

At lunch, my last meal at the Belgrave, when describing my experience I distributed copies of the clerk of court's business cards.

"It won't do any good until we are organized," one of the older girls said. "If a few of us kick or insist on being paid sixteen instead of thirteen we'll be discharged and blacklisted. If we organize we can force up wages——"

"And cut out tips," a younger girl interrupted. "It's a darn shame for the hotels to put up their rates and expect guests to pay extra for service. It's a darn shame."

While this was going on the girls at the other end of the table had been whispering together. Now the girl at the head of the table held up her hand, signalling for silence. Then, after a glance at the adjoining table to make sure the assistant housekeeper was not listening, she informed me that she had been delegated to ask me to remain and organize the waitresses, beginning with those working in the larger hotels.

The request was so unexpected that for a moment I was dumb. On recovering myself I reminded them that our country was at war. So long as the war lasted we at home must keep our shoulder to the wheel. If the wheel cut into our flesh we must endure it for the sake of pushing the load to safety.

"And after the war?" the spokesman asked.

“After the war organize. Then, if you prove your consistency by refusing to take tips, the public will help you get a decent wage,” I replied. And I still believe that I spoke the truth.



## CHAPTER VI

### GOOD HUNTING-GROUND

ON my return after this experience Mrs. Wilkins said that I had lost twenty pounds, while Alice candidly assured me that I could not look worse had I been buried and dug up. Such backhanded compliments did not encourage me to take either of them into my confidence. And, though Alice remarked on the length of time it had taken me to get to New York, it did not seem necessary for me to mention having stopped off at a station in Pennsylvania long enough to be interviewed by the housekeeper of Sutton House. Neither did I feel called on to confide that the housekeeper had engaged me to take the position to be left vacant, three weeks hence, by Mary's cousin.

Having returned to New York six dollars poorer than I quitted it, the necessity of paying in advance for my room and my food left me no time to loaf. Though experience had taught me that Tuesday is the least desirable day in the week to hunt a job I determined to take my chances in spite of Mrs. Wilkins and Alice urging me to remain in bed and rest. Both offered to loan me money.

The most promising advertisement in the help-wanted columns that morning was that of a biscuit factory on Long Island—women and girls at seven dollars a week. The advertisement stated that only one car-fare was needed from Manhattan—such an important detail that it might be called an inducement.

Begrudging this sixty cents a week I debated with myself the wisdom of following the advice of Alice and the

hat-trimmer—waiting until later in the week. My antipathy to borrowing money of my friends finally outweighed my unwillingness to pay car-fare, and I set out. Though I reached the biscuit factory a half-hour before the doors opened, there were seven women ahead of me. Fifty-one came later.

After Sea Foam, I enjoyed standing in the open air and chatting with the women and girls. It was a balmy spring morning, and a sheen of soft green covered the trees and fields. My fellow applicants were all comfortably dressed and appeared to be cheerful. There was no pushing and crowding for place near the entrance.

When finally the doors were opened we filed in smiling and in order. The bare little employment office was spotlessly clean, and there were plenty of seats.

The method of selection was unusual. The manager asked all who had worked for the factory to stand up; fifty-three rose. As he took the name of each girl and woman he asked why she had left, and if she preferred to return to the department in which she had previously worked. About half claimed to have left because they were needed at home, many had tried other work in hope of bettering themselves, and one had been discharged.

Instead of asking this girl the reason for her discharge, the manager handed her paper and pencil and requested her to write it out while he attended to us other applicants. Not knowing how to spell a word this girl, who sat next me, showed me what she had written—she had been sent away from the factory because the boss in the packing department said she needed a bath.

When my turn came I elected to be sent to the packing department, and for the single reason that I wished to see and know the boss who had enough courage to send home a worker who had neglected to wash her face and hands. This boss, Jane Ward, proved to be one of the most ad-

mirable characters I have ever known and one of the most capable of women. It took her about three minutes to show me how to pack crackers—I began with saltines.

The packing department filled one floor of the huge factory. It was perfectly lighted, heated, and ventilated. The women and girl workers wore all-enveloping blue cotton aprons with becoming Dutch caps to match. These caps covered the hair as completely as the aprons covered our dresses. The men, both workers and managers, wore coats and caps of white cotton. These garments were all supplied and laundered by the factory, fresh ones being distributed every other day.

Like folding circulars and addressing envelopes, packing crackers is monotonous though neither fatiguing nor disagreeable. Indeed, for the first few days I found it uncommonly pleasant—workers being allowed to eat all the crackers they wish providing they take none from the building. Several times during my first morning Jane Ward, when making her rounds, would fill my apron pockets with various varieties. And the girls working at the machines would make it convenient to pass me along a handful of fresh ones from the wide iron flats on which they came hot from the ovens.

During the first day I ate ravenously. By the afternoon of the second day it did not require much self-denial to pass a machine without sampling that bake. At the end of the week I was entirely content to allow Mrs. Wilkins and Alice to consume the bag of fresh broken crackers which I purchased at one-third the regular price and took home with me every evening.

The happy faces of my fellow workers were a continual source of pleasure to me. In no place where I had worked had I found such unmistakable evidence of general contentment. In spite of the fatigue resulting from my Atlantic City experience, I found myself even on my first day feel-

ing more and more encouraged as the hours wore away. By lunch-time I had become almost light-hearted.

But when Jane asked a girl who worked at the same table with me to take me with her to the lunch-room conducted by the factory for its employees, I drew back. My memory of the lunch-room conducted by the department store for its employees was still too vivid. Never again would I be caught in such a trap! I thanked Jane, but when she had passed on I told the girl that it being my habit to take a walk in the fresh air during the lunch-hour, I would look for an eating-place on the street.

"I've never been able to stomach the food in these joints around here," the girl replied. "And their prices is something fierce."

On my inquiring if the food she got in the factory lunch-room was really eatable she very wisely advised me to come and see before putting on my hat and coat. Stepping inside the door of the restaurant I stared in amazement at the food, the helpings, and the service.

It was a cafeteria with the serving-counter shaped like an elongated horseshoe. A squad of men, all in spotless white, stood within the hollow of the horseshoe serving the workers as they passed along, the women on one arm of the shoe, the men on the other. On paying their score the men turned into the men's dining-room, and the women into that reserved for women workers.

That, my first lunch, as recorded in my diary, consisted of two slices of roast beef, each as large as my hand and almost as thick, on a mound of mashed potatoes with a-plenty of brown gravy; one-eighth of a large apple pie; bread and butter, a cup of coffee with grade A milk and all the sugar I wanted—all for eighteen cents. Everything was deliciously cooked and carefully served. After the atrociously cooked and slovenly served meals of the Belgrave this factory lunch-room seemed to me nothing short of marvellous.

That night I recounted my experience to Alice, the hat-trimmer, and the little organist. They all threatened to give up their jobs and go to packing crackers. Every evening after that they never failed to ask:

“Well, what did you have for lunch to-day?”

The portions were so surprisingly generous that I often found it difficult to eat it all. It may have been that our stern course of appetite suppression had affected me. Be that as it may, there were several days when only shame prevented me from asking permission to take home with me the slice of meat I had not been able to eat. Mrs. Wilkins and Alice would have been glad to get it.

At that time meats of all sorts were so high that none of us women on the top floor thought of having it oftener than once a day. Potatoes were so expensive that Mrs. Wilkins and the organist had stopped buying them—Alice and I were rice-eaters. Milk had gone up a cent a pint, and the loaf of bread for which we were then paying eight cents was decreasing in size so rapidly that each time we bought one we wondered if we would not be forced to use a magnifying-glass to be able to see our next.

Ah me! The time came all too soon when I had to leave this job of good food and cheerful surroundings—a whole week before the date set for me to take the position left vacant by the marriage of Mary’s cousin. And I bitterly resented the circumstances that caused me to leave though it was the offer of a promotion.

“We never promote a girl until she has been here two weeks,” Jane Ward said to me late in the afternoon of my second Friday. “Your second week won’t be up until next Tuesday, but you have done so well that the manager says I may put you in charge of that machine.” She indicated a machine which at the time she spoke was bringing down hot gingersnaps from the oven on the floor above. Then she added: “It means a dollar a week raise for you, and it is a sit-down job.”

For two whole days I debated with myself the question—to accept the promotion or not to accept. Those bountiful well-cooked lunches were a real temptation. Alice and Mrs. Wilkins had remarked more than once on the change in my appearance. The scales proved that I had regained seven of the fifteen pounds lost while in Atlantic City. If Jane had not been so eager to reward me! Or if only I hadn't been so eager to make good.

Late Sunday afternoon I posted a letter telling Jane that it would be impossible for me to return to work the following day as I was needed at home. Though untrue, that excuse represented the awakening of my sense of personal responsibility.

For had I accepted that promotion I would have taken the place of some woman who really needed the dollar a week raise. Besides, I would have given Jane the trouble of training me. No such qualms of conscience had troubled me when the manager of the premium station offered me permanent employment, though I was perfectly aware that fifty-six other women had been hoping and working for the position.

Before turning away from the biscuit factory I wish to state that even to-day, after my experience in so many different lines of work, I have but one criticism to make: There is no reason why women should be forced to stand while packing crackers.

This may seem a small matter, but to the woman worker it is most serious. In all my experience I have never found any work so fatiguing as standing on my feet continuously for several hours at a time. The fact that the feet are incased in pointed-toed shoes with high heels does not lessen the strain.

Women should have better sense than to wear such shoes to work. Indeed? Let any one making such a protest try to buy, in New York, a pair of shoes with round toes

and moderately low heels when the other style is in fashion. I have tried, and though I succeeded, it was after much searching and always at an additional cost of several dollars. Besides, because a woman works for her living does not make her any less a woman; and every woman, unless she is a fool, wishes to appear well dressed—in the fashion.

Though I was up and out before eight o'clock the next morning, I returned to my room late in the afternoon without having secured a position. It was not for the lack of trying. I called at nine places advertising for workers. At the first place there were twenty-two applicants for two vacancies. At another there were forty women waiting when I arrived, and several came later—only six vacancies. Before the door of a down-town candy factory I was one of more than fifty women and girls. Many of them had been waiting since eight o'clock. At twelve a man came out and roughly ordered us all off. When some of us protested he burst out laughing and informed us that all vacancies had been filled before eight-thirty.

The next day I was more fortunate—that is, I was taken on at the first place to which I applied. This was a candy factory. After packing fancy chocolates during the morning I was sent to another department and assigned to the task of helping a chocolate-dipper. This position, so my fellow packers informed me, was very desirable since the next step up is chocolate-dipping, a work that always commands a good wage.

“It's grand!” one little girl, who looked as though she had not washed her face or combed her hair for a week, assured me. “You'll learn how to dip. They make big money, dippers do. I've gotter cousin who married a dipper. She used to make as much as eighteen a week. She has the swellest clothes!”

During my first day in this candy factory I imagined that the unneat appearance of my fellow workers was caused by

dirt accumulated since their arrival that morning. The next day taught me better. There were precious few of them, either men or women, who had the appearance of having washed their faces before leaving home.

The apron handed me on my second day was so soiled that I asked the woman in charge how often she had them washed.

"Wash these things," she cried, laughing, as she held up another apron in a worse condition than the one she had given me, "they ain't never washed sence I been here. When they gets so sticky and stuck up that they spoil your clothes they take 'em away and give me some more. I guess they burn 'em. They ain't fitten for nothing else."

"If customers knew that, perhaps they wouldn't pay such high prices for your candies," I suggested.

"What folks don't know don't hurt 'em none," she retorted.

That night I had a severe bilious attack, and when morning came I was too sick to think of going to work. Had it been the biscuit factory or any other position in which I had worked, excepting the department store, I would have gotten Alice to telephone and give my reason for not reporting.

Two days in that candy factory were enough for me. Even the money due me—at the rate of eight dollars a week—was not sufficient to draw me back. Now when I see the name of that firm on a candy-box I very gladly allow other people to consume it. Yet I am fond of candy.

Fortunately, on Friday morning the postman brought me a letter from the housekeeper at Sutton House enclosing a railroad ticket. When I told Alice that I had engaged to go as head chambermaid she rose in wrath. A domestic servant in a hotel was bad enough, she protested, but going in a private family was a disgrace for which she could not find a name.



"Yet when you are at home you make beds, sweep the floors, and do other so-called menial work," I reminded her.

"I'm a college woman," she haughtily informed me.

"If a lack of education in the worker renders the work disgraceful," I replied, trying to argue with her, "then surely my degree together with my attainments as a writer should remove the stigma."

But she would not argue. It was disgraceful of me to go as a domestic servant. Nobody would ever have any respect for me, and that was all there was to it. It was the one subject to which there was but one side. Domestic service was disgraceful.

This in the country that my ancestors had struggled to found—that all under its flag might be free and equal.

## CHAPTER VII

### FEMALES OF THE SPECIES

THE family at Sutton House comprised Mr. and Mrs. Sutton, both under thirty-five, their only child a boy eight years old, and his tutor, a young college man.

The place was very beautiful. The house, Southern colonial, was large and dignified without being showy. The park and gardens surrounding it contained eleven acres—at least the chauffeur, who brought me from the station, so informed me. Certainly they were ample and perfectly kept. The trees were noticeably handsome, all of them indigenous. Though an unusually elaborate establishment for America, it was not an imitation. Perhaps its most striking feature was that it did not suggest England or any other foreign country. It looked to be just what it was—the country home of a well-bred American family of large fortune.

The American atmosphere was so distinct that—watching the house as we approached along the wide drive, I had a subconscious expectation of seeing an old negro, immaculately dressed, make his appearance. He didn't come. Nor when we passed near the stables and garage was there any sound of laughing or singing. At the side entrance I was met by the housekeeper, an Englishwoman.

There were fifteen servants besides the men in the stables, in the garage, and the gardeners. Every one of them foreigners.

“Why will Americans persist in surrounding themselves with indifferent foreign ‘help’ when they might have the best servants and most loyal Americans, for the asking?”

was the question that I asked myself that night after my arrival at the Sutton House, and I am still asking it.

I have known many foreign servants. Even the best of them was not so good as a competent negro would have been in the same place. I am a Southerner born and bred among negroes. Besides, I am descended from a long line of slave-owning ancestors. I do not believe that Abraham Lincoln himself was a more loyal American than the present-day descendants of the people he fought to free.

Yet in spite of their excellent qualities, their loyalty, we turn them down. Just let an American family get a little money, and the first thing they do in the way of display is to secure as many "help" as their pocketbook will permit.

Being foreigners, all the servants at Sutton House were, of course, "help." Even the French maid spoke of herself as "Madame's personal help," and even the fact that she received sixty dollars a month in wages, her laundry, a room to herself, and all the clothes that her mistress did not care to wear the second time did not prevent her from disloyalty. A negro girl would have given better service than this woman and never have permitted her mistress to be criticised in her presence.

Under my direction there were five chambermaids, a scrubwoman, and a man for cleaning. The man was a Swede and the maids all Irish. My wages were forty dollars a month with laundry and a room to myself. Because I chanced to take the fancy of the housekeeper I took all my meals with her instead of with the other servants. Had it been otherwise I would have heard more back-stairs gossip than I did.

Certainly I heard enough to make me know that, excepting the housekeeper, neither Mr. nor Mrs. Sutton had a friend among their "help." Unlike the horde of foreigners who have usurped their rightful places, negro servants are loyal to their employers. A negro, as a rule, has too

much self-esteem to belittle the person from whom he takes wages.

Sutton House was crowded with guests every week-end, but from Monday noon to Friday afternoon Mrs. Sutton was generally alone with her little son and his tutor. Mr. Sutton usually returned to the city with the first of his guests to leave Monday morning, and seldom made his appearance before Saturday afternoon. He stood well in his profession, was a hard worker, and might have been devoted to his home had the distance between his office and Sutton House admitted of his spending his nights there.

Mrs. Sutton, so I learned from the housekeeper, was an only child of wealthy parents—the darling of her old father, who had insisted on humoring every whim. It being her whim to come to Sutton House before her husband's business permitted him to leave town, the family had moved out.

Compared with the department store, the premium station, and the Sea Foam Hotel this position was a holiday among perfect surroundings. It is true that week-ends every servant had as much as he or she could properly do. The rest of the time the chambermaids finished their work before ten o'clock. After that I arranged for them to go off, leaving two on watch until lunch-time. At lunch the watch changed, and again at seven, their dinner-hour. This last watch remained on until ten, which was supposed to be the family bedtime. All that was required of them was to sit, one on each bedroom floor, and be ready to respond promptly when called. While on watch I encouraged, or at least I tried to encourage, these girls to read, to sew, or do any quiet handiwork.

So far as I saw, it was effort thrown away. Not one of the five ever darned her stockings—of course they all wore silk stockings, also silk underwear. Indeed, I believe three out of the five boasted that she never wore anything be-

sides silk except when she was on duty. Instead of employing her mind or her fingers, one and all of the five would sit gazing out the nearest window and resort to all sorts of tricks to go to the servants' quarters. Judging by these women, and the thousands of other men and women of the same race, I am convinced that what we are pleased to call "wonderful Irish imagination" is the result of idleness—air-castle building. They are the most gorgeous of liars.

Each and every one of the maids at Sutton House claimed to be direct descendants of an Irish king. One of them assured me that if she had her "rights" she would be living in a palace and never have to "turn her hand"—the Princess Royal of Ireland. Each one of them had so many saints in her family that I used to wonder how she kept track of them all. Needless to say, they were inveterate churchgoers. Such weird ideas as they attributed to their priest!

"Father Hallahan said we were not to abuse the Germans," one of them told the Italian scrubwoman. "The Germans are good friends to the Irish."

This failing to impress the scrubwoman, the Princess Royal gave additional information.

"Yes, and the order came straight from Rome," said she, with a defiant toss of her nappy-looking head.

This so aroused the little Italian woman that she damned the Germans and she damned the Irish, but most of all she damned Rome. I have never seen a more furious human being. How she rolled out Italian swear words! Her husband was in the Italian army and she was struggling to keep their little home together and their children at school. Her father, her brother, and two of her husband's brothers had been killed in the war.

She came to me with tears streaming over her face. When she had turned over her mop and pail to me she fell on her knees, and, burying her face in her apron, knelt

beside the bathtub, rocking her body back and forth and sobbing. The Princess Royal and her sister German sympathizer took the next train to Philadelphia. They were replaced by two Swedes, quiet, hard-working girls.

The middle of my second week the housekeeper told me that Mrs. Sutton wished me to go out with her that evening after dinner. Heretofore the housekeeper had accompanied her on these evening automobile trips. Now the old woman complained of feeling unwell and I was to take her place. The car that evening was a fast roadster with three seats. I sat on the back seat. After a run of about an hour we stopped at a country inn. Mrs. Sutton told me that I might either come in or remain in the car.

It was a lovely evening during the last of May. Sure that our stop would be only for a few minutes, I decided to remain in the car; Mrs. Sutton followed by the chauffeur, a young Italian with good legs, entered the inn. After waiting in the car for more than a half-hour, and feeling cramped from sitting so long, I got out and strolled around the grounds. Finally, prompted by a desire to kill time, I stepped up on the piazza and looked in through a window.

Mrs. Sutton and the chauffeur were having supper together. By a casual observer they might easily have been mistaken for lovers. After their meal they joined the dancers. More than an hour later they returned to the car in which I had resumed my seat about fifteen minutes earlier. It was well past two o'clock when we finally returned to Sutton House.

The next morning I got up soon after sunrise and sat at the window of my room. There had been a warm shower during the earlier hours, and the gardens and grove looked like Paradise—the perfectly kept lawns, the flowers just beginning to give a touch of color here and there, the great trees with their young leaves softly green and glistening. And over all a clear blue sky, through which floated banks

of wonderful white clouds that looked as though they might have been freshly washed by the angels. Young summer, like a spirit, walked.

With all this peace and beauty around me I sat and dreamed. At first it was not a pleasant dream though it concerned a new combination—a discovery that, as a rule, thrills a writer. In my dream I questioned if in place of time-worn love-affairs between masters and serving-maids, we writers of realism would have to depict mistresses courting straight-legged chauffeurs. The idea was too repulsive. In spite of the scene witnessed the night before, the tears of the doll-baby young woman at the publishing house and other whispered hints, I refused to believe it. Even though such a diseased condition was creeping in I was sure it would be wiped out by the World War before it had time to take root.

The thought of the war caused my dreams to change. I had my first vision of America, perhaps the world, as it would be after the terrible conflict in which my country had just entered. After it—for surely good must come of so great a disaster—there would be no idle, untrained women to menace human progress. In America we would have neither human cooties nor human drudges; all such inhuman creatures wiped out by the war, we would become a nation of workers, struggling to carry out the ideals of the founders of our country.

During breakfast I notified the housekeeper that I must leave at the end of the week. She remonstrated vigorously. When her offer to increase my wages failed to move me she confided to me her plan for my promotion. She, it appeared, had been the nursery-governess of Mrs. Sutton, had remained in the family, and when her former pupil married had taken charge of her new home as housekeeper. Now, the old woman continued, having saved enough to keep her comfortable, she wished to spend her last days among

her own people in England. I was to take her position as housekeeper.

Even that did not cause me to change my mind. I told her that I must go and not later than the end of that week. Along toward the middle of the morning Mrs. Sutton's French maid came to me. Madame wished to see me in her bedroom at once. On entering Mrs. Sutton's room, a fable told me by Booger when I was a very small child flashed into my mind.

Booger was a young negro who served my father's family in the double capacity of stable-boy and my nurse. Born during that period when the fortunes of the people of the Southern States were at lowest ebb, resulting from our Civil War, I did not share the advantage of being nursed by the "Mammy" adored by my older sisters and brothers. So far as I know, my father's stable-boy was my only nurse. And so far as I have been able to learn, nobody knows why I bestowed on him the name of Booger. To the rest of the world he was Peter.

"The Lord God done made Miss Rose white," according to Booger. "But yerly one mornin' whilst Marse Adam was a-walkin' in the Gyarden of Eden he done kotch Miss Rose when she was a-turnin' back her clothes an' washin' of her face. Miss Rose was so 'shamed that she turned red. She's been red ever sence."

Mrs. Sutton, lying among her pillows, with the morning's mail scattered over the silken coverlet of her bed, reminded me of a half-opened white rose caught at her toilet and blushing a shell-pink. She was more beautiful than any flower in her garden. Her wide blue eyes were the color of the sky into which I had gazed at sunrise, and as fathomless. Who can fathom the soul of a flippant woman?

When I refused her offer to raise my wages she told me of the housekeeper's plan for my promotion. When that failed she acted like a spoiled child. She wished to know



my reason for leaving, she insisted on knowing, she must know.

Looking at her—she seemed hardly more than a girl—I wondered if it might not be a kindness to give her the reason for my sudden departure. Though of course I had never intended to remain long enough to inherit the housekeeper's position, I had expected to stay three weeks, perhaps four, and give one week's notice before leaving. Now I determined to tell her my reason for changing my plans—a reason within itself sufficient to cause any conscientious servant to quit her employ.

I crossed to the foot of her bed and she smiled up at me.

"You really wish to know my reason?" I asked, speaking seriously. She nodded, and, smiling, showed a flash of her perfect teeth. "It is because I don't care to appear as a witness in a divorce case in which the co-respondent is your husband's hired servant, your chauffeur."

She stared at me dumfounded. When she understood her face flamed crimson. Then she sprang up in bed and reached out to ring for her maid.

"You must not do that," I told her, and I stepped between the head of her bed and the electric buttons. "You may call your housekeeper but not that Frenchwoman."

"How dare you!" she cried, and her manner was so commonly melodramatic that I almost smiled.

"I know the servants in your house better than you know them yourself," I told her, still holding my position. "And I shall do my best to protect you from yourself."

"Protect me!" she sneered. "You, my husband's detective! Yes, that's who you are. My husband got you out here to watch me. You—you sneak!"

I let her talk until she wore herself out. When she again tried to ring for her maid I rang for the housekeeper.

The housekeeper came. Honest old soul! On these evening trips when she acted as chaperon they had gone

in a touring-car. When they stopped at a road-house she had always remained comfortably dozing in the tonneau.

"I shall take you straight to your mother, Mildred," the housekeeper informed Mrs. Sutton, when I had explained the situation. And I realized that she had gone back twenty years, and was again the governess threatening her spoiled charge. "Your mother will know what to do with you."

Feeling in honor bound to clear Mr. Sutton of the suspicion of employing a detective I reminded his wife in the housekeeper's presence that no person who had entered her home in such a capacity would have given so candid a reason for leaving. The old woman swept the suspicion aside with a wave of her hand. Mr. Sutton was a gentleman, she assured me. There should be no scandal, for Mildred's mother knew how to manage her daughter.

While I was packing my few belongings the housekeeper came to my room. She would always be grateful to me, she said, for ringing for her and not allowing Mildred to call the "French fool." Then she offered to give me a letter of recommendation and I accepted it. When paying the wages due me she included my railroad ticket back to New York City. Not once did she ask me to hold my tongue.

On returning to New York I learned that Mrs. Tompkins had ordered Alice home; the hat-trimming season being over, Mrs. Wilkins was preparing to resume her duties in the linen-room of the Coney Island hotel; and the little organist had already gone to Maine to spend the summer with her mother and sisters. The restaurant-keeper, having been mysteriously robbed of all his trousers excepting the pair he was wearing, declared to me his intention to "get out." The reporter was shortly to take up his suitcase and walk, and the gentleman of many shoes and walking-sticks greeted me with the information that he had purchased a water-front estate on the Sound.

It would seem that I should have been eagerly preparing to write the story of Polly Preston. Certainly I would never be able to incorporate in one novel all the material I had already accumulated. Yet I never was farther from wishing to begin a book. It may have been the general unrest caused by the war. Even now I can give no explanation for my mental condition at that time. So, instead of returning to my own field, I set out the following morning to get a new job.

Having secured all previous positions through the help-wanted columns of the newspapers, I now determined to try employment agencies. My plan was to register at an agency making a specialty of supplying domestic servants, pay the required fee, and leave my three letters of recommendation. These three letters! One, as stated, was given me by the housekeeper of Sutton House. The other two I had used getting in at Sea Foam—one written by Alice from her Washington City address, the other written by myself in my own proper person. In it I had stated that Emily Porter had been for twenty years in the service of my mother, and since my mother's death she had been in my employ.

After the writers of these letters were communicated with I expected, in course of time, to get the refusal of a position in a private family—as waitress, second girl, or chambermaid. That was as I expected the matter to develop.

What happened? Within five minutes after I entered the agency, before I had paid my fee or handed in my letters, two women were bidding for my services. Both were expensively gowned, both lived in a quasi-fashionable suburb of New York, and both wished me to come to her at once as second maid, the difference between the two being that one had children and the other dogs.

I elected the one with children. Instead of her waiting and investigating my references she insisted on my accom-

panying her back home, giving me three hours to meet her at the railroad-station. When I saw her house I understood her hurry. Chaos! Dirty chaos at that. The cook, Irish, of course, told me that five maids had come and gone during the two previous weeks.

The house had fifteen rooms, two baths, a large cellar, two wide porches, and two wider piazzas. There was a lot of shrubbery on the place and several long brick walks. In the family there was a young-lady daughter, the mother, the only son, two younger daughters, the father, and a little girl of six. I name them in the order of their relative importance.

The little girl, the mother once explained in the presence of the child, was a mistake. On the birth of her son, having decided that four children were enough, she determined to have no more—hence the difference of ten years between her son and little Mistake.

Had these people been content to live in a house of eight rooms, and do their own work with the assistance of a woman to do the laundry and the heavier cooking, they would have, in all human probability, been a happy family. They were good-natured, good-looking, and with sufficient traces of good breeding to have made them attractive.

During the seven days that I remained with them I never got to my room, which was in the garret and shared by the cook, before nine o'clock at night. How I did work! I did everything from firing the furnace to running ribbons in the underwear of the marriageable daughter.

For upward of two years it had been the chief ambition of the family to marry off this eldest girl. When I came on the scene it had become, so they all thought, a vital necessity. And I, succumbing to the atmosphere around me, did my best to help along the match. The mother explained to me that if they could only announce the engagement of this daughter the maiden aunt, for whom she was

named, would see to it that she had a proper wedding and also pay the family debts.

The idea that these three grown girls, the youngest being past eighteen, might work and earn their own living never seemed to enter their mother's head. The fact that they did not work, did not know how to do anything more useful than to play tennis and golf, she proclaimed from the housetops. Sad to relate, it was the literal truth. So far as I could learn, neither of them had ever done so much as make a bed, dust a room, or mend a garment. I never knew them to pick up a magazine, a book, or a sofa-pillow, though they knew how to scatter them broadcast. No, indeed, it was beneath their dignity to do anything to keep their home comfortable or clean, yet they boasted of skill at tennis and their golf score.

What a silly un-American idea it is that knocking a ball across country is more ennobling than doing anything that tends to make a home comfortable and happy! Will anybody deny that it takes more sense to cook or serve a good dinner than it does to play a good game of golf? Now I am not decrying the game of golf. Indeed, it appeals to me as a very good way to get elderly and delicate persons, who take no interest in nature, to exercise in the fresh air.

For a person who cares for wild or growing things golf is impossible. I cannot imagine Theodore Roosevelt wishing to become expert at golf. I can imagine the number of balls he would have lost while watching a bird, investigating a gopher hole, or studying a plant.

Besides, I have for a good many years had a pet theory—why Colonel Roosevelt did not cultivate the game of golf. May he not have felt sure that he could learn nothing from persons met on the links—rich idlers, men who have “made their pile,” always hidebound conservatives and their hangers-on? We all know that the most popular of our Presidents was interested in workers in every field—

eager to learn their opinion, to get their point of view. Was he ever known to show interest in the mind processes of an idler?

Yet, in spite of the so recent example of this most typical American, mothers and fathers, American men and women, persist in bringing their children up with the Old World prejudice against useful work. They may spend any amount of time and energy on any work provided it is silly and useless, but let it only become useful and at once it becomes a stigma, a disgrace.

And so it was with this family. The three girls could all play a little on the piano and sing a little with their kitten voices. Each was ardently certain that she could drive an automobile if only her father could be induced to buy one—poor silent, care-worn, overworked father! He loved his wife and was very fond of his children, yet I think he used to dread to come home and at the same time be afraid not to come.

When I told the cook of my intention to leave at the end of my first week she called me a fool. She urged me to follow her example and stick it out long enough to have something worth going to court about.

The mother and three daughters felt ill used when I announced my departure. The eldest daughter remarked that she really didn't see what more a second girl would want—nobody ever interfered with me, they let me have my own way. Her mother told me that I really must wait until Saturday. Her husband never gave her money for the servants except on Saturdays—it was then Tuesday. She gave me the use of the family commutation ticket with the understanding that I was to deliver little Mistake to her maiden aunt.

That enabled me to truthfully assure Alice and the hat-trimmer that the experience had not cost me anything even though I had received no wages. This time Alice said that

instead of my looking like I had been buried and dug up I looked as if I had been buried and had to scratch my way out. Mrs. Wilkins agreed with her.

The next day was the end of our partnership. Alice, obeying her mother, returned to her home. I accompanied her to the train, and received as much advice as could be packed into fifteen minutes by a fast talker. Though candor forces me to admit that most of it flowed out of one ear as fast as it was driven into the other, a few pieces did reach my brain and so lodged in the meshes of my memory. One of these lodgments was an earnest request that I forsake the help-wanted column and confine myself to reputable employment agencies. And Alice emphasized reputable.

Earlier in the winter, following Alice's advice, I had tried an agency which made a specialty of placing college graduates. I had registered, paid my dollar, and been told they would communicate with me as soon as anything along my line turned up. Now, on my way back to the rooming-house, after watching Alice get aboard the train for Washington City, I called again at this agency and reminded them of my application.

Much to my surprise, I learned that I was an unskilled worker in my own line. Because I had never been a proof-reader, sat in an editorial chair, nor taught a class in story-writing I was unskilled. Neither my college degree nor the fact that I had published several novels amounted to a row of pins. H'm, I thought, why did you go to the trouble of changing your name and otherwise sailing under false colors? As an unskilled worker you are really in the class to which you belong.

From this agency I went to a "placement bureau," the annex of a semiphilanthropic organization whose specialty is "reduced gentlewomen." Here the charge was fifty cents for registration. When it came my turn to be interviewed

by the overdressed woman in charge, she earnestly advised me to take a secretarial course at a particular school. She gave me her personal card to the head of this school and assured me that she had more demands for graduates from this school than she could possibly fill that season. As I had overheard her give the same advice to three other women I was not very much impressed. However, as I had come there for advice I decided to see how far hers would take me.

At the school I learned that the shortest course was for six months, and the lowest price was one hundred dollars. The head of the school smilingly informed me that as I might not have to study English a reduction, perhaps ten dollars, might be arranged for.

Returning to the "placement bureau," I applied to the same overdressed individual for part-time work that would give me my maintenance while I was studying to become a secretary. She gave me cards of introduction to the matron of two institutions.



## CHAPTER VIII

### ST. ROSE'S HOME FOR GIRLS

MRS. BOSSMAN, the matron of St. Rose's Home for Girls, which I reached after a railroad journey of several hours, received me with great cordiality. She was very much in need of a secretary, she said, and, while not able to pay a salary, would be glad to give me a comfortable room with my board and laundry. I promised to move in, bag and baggage, the following morning immediately after breakfast. At our first interview she impressed me so favorably that I failed to notice either the thinness of her lips or the color of her eyes.

On my return the following morning she again greeted me with great cordiality. And even as I accepted her extended hand the color and expression of her eyes, and the thinness of her lips were revealed to me as though by a blaze of light. With this realization there flashed across my memory a remark of the late Mrs. Jefferson Davis.

I had been to the opera—"Faust" with a wonderful caste, Eames and the two de Reski. On my return I went into Mrs. Davis' bedroom—I was spending the winter in New York under her chaperonage—to tell her about it. She was sitting up in bed reading, and laying her book aside she listened attentively to my praise of Marguerite and Faust, and my criticism of Mephisto. Then I boldly declared:

"Only a tall, thin man, intensely brunette, should attempt to play the devil."

"A tall, thin, dark man?" Mrs. Davis questioned, shaking her head. Then she took off her spectacles and wiped them. "No, my dear. No. My idea of the devil is a

beautiful blonde woman with childishly innocent blue eyes and thin lips. Yes, the devil is a woman. I'm sure of it. Only a woman of the type I describe will conceive, plan, and perpetrate a deed of supremest cruelty and selfishness. I never trust a blonde woman."

What queer ideas old women have! As if the color of a person's eyes and hair really had anything to do with the quality of their heart. Then there popped into my mind a lawyer, a member of the New York City bar in good standing, who had gravely cautioned me against trusting a man who "ran-down" his shoes. Evidently queerness was not limited to old women.

But a woman with the intelligence of the widow of the President of the Confederacy—the thousands of persons she had met and known during her eighty years—might not her judgment be of value? All of these thoughts raced through my consciousness during the brief instant that Mrs. Bossman clasped my hand. Vexed by what seemed to me my own trivial mind, I was pleased by her suggestion to take me to my room.

Such a charming room it proved to be! On the second floor and immediately over the main entrance to St. Rose. It was tastefully furnished and spotlessly clean. At the end facing the door there was a broad double window festooned by ivy that looked into the green feathery foliage of a giant elm.

Gratified by my exclamation of pleased surprise, Mrs. Bossman told me that she had selected the room because it was next her own and convenient to the bathroom, shared by herself and Miss Pugh, the assistant matron. Miss Pugh, she explained, was an old friend whom she had induced to give up her former position in a large foundling asylum to come to St. Rose. She, Miss Pugh, was a wonderful disciplinarian, and as chockful of ideas as an egg with meat. With her as her assistant, and me as her secre-

tary, Mrs. Bossman declared that she felt her success assured.

She had been in charge of St. Rose, I then learned, less than two months. Previous to coming there she had, for many years, been at the head of a reformatory.

Chatting about odds and ends, Mrs. Bossman waited while I removed my coat and hat, and brushed my hair a bit. Just as I turned away from the mirror there was a quick rap on the door, and without waiting for a reply in stepped a little woman whose head reminded me sharply of a hickory-nut doll.

"My dear!" she cried, grabbing hold of my hand. "Three educated women!" She indicated herself, Mrs. Bossman, and me. "We can stand against the world."

Just what call we would have to stand against the world I did not understand. Being ready to do my best as secretary to the matron of St. Rose, I graciously accepted her greeting and the compliments that appeared to belong to it. Walking between the two I passed down the broad stairs and into the private office of the head of the institution.

Confidently expecting to spend the summer in this charming place I glanced about the room that was to be my headquarters. Like every part of the house that I had seen, this room was spotlessly clean and furnished tastefully.

Sprays of ivy moved by the breeze peeked in at the two broad windows that, opening on the street, were shaded from the direct rays of the sun by the low-sweeping limbs of the elm. From the windows my eyes travelled to the walls. I met the gaze of several bewhiskered gentlemen of solemn countenance in clerical garb and black frames.

My secretarial duties, as then outlined to me, would consume about two hours each morning, excepting Sundays. Once I had finished this daily stint my time was to be my own to do with as I preferred.

"Only," Mrs. Bossman added smilingly, "Miss Pugh and I both hope that you will spend at least a few evenings with us in my private sitting-room."

Why did Mrs. Davis' caution against blonde women keep bobbing up in my mind? Ah, why indeed!

Being in my room when the lunch-bell sounded, I was a fraction of a minute late entering the dining-room. A woman whom I had never seen met me and introduced herself as the housekeeper. She gave me as my permanent place a chair at a long table about which there were already seated eighteen women.

When I had taken my chair the housekeeper took her seat and introduced me to the other women. As each name was called the owner would glance up at me, nod her head, and then drop her eyes back to her plate of soup. Never a smile, not one word. The soup finished, while they waited for the next course I noticed that three or four women spoke to their next neighbors, always so low that they seemed to whisper.

Was this the effect of the presence of a stranger? I wondered. If so it was up to me to break the ice. Selecting for my first attack a handsome woman with red hair, who sat just across the table from me, I inquired in what capacity she was connected with St. Rose.

She was the "mother" of a cottage, she informed me. All present excepting the housekeeper, the seamstress, and myself were either cottage mothers or their assistants. Yes, they took all their meals in the dining-room. The children ate in their cottages—that is, excepting the large girls serving us. They took their meals in the kitchen with the cook.

By a persistent effort, addressing directly first one woman and then another, I succeeded in arousing quite a buzz of conversation. Suddenly silence. Even sentences already begun broke off half uttered, as though the tongues

had become suddenly paralyzed. Puzzled, I glanced around the table. The eyes of every woman, even the housekeeper, were fastened on her plate; more puzzled, I glanced around the room.

Mrs. Bossman and Miss Pugh had entered and were taking their seats at a small table near the door. After this the women seated at the long table opened their lips only for food. At the small table the matron and her assistant conversed in subdued tones. After making two or three remarks in the hope of reviving the conversation I gave up. Judging by their faces, I might as well have tried to make myself entertaining at a table of deaf-mutes. So to the end of the meal—depressed and depressing silence.

After lunch, on my expressing a wish to be made useful, the assistant matron invited me to go with her to one of the cottages. This "mother" was having her afternoon off.

Much to my surprise I found that the attractiveness of St. Rose did not extend beyond the building occupied by the matron and her immediate staff. Desolate is the only word that adequately describes the cottage to which Miss Pugh conducted me. Never a picture on the walls, not a flower, nor a book. Bare walls of a forlorn dingy tint, and dingier floors. Even the bewhiskered gentlemen in their black frames would have been an improvement.

There were thirty-odd little girls in this cottage ranging in age from five to thirteen years. The supper, which was served by the older girls under the supervision of the assistant matron, consisted of canned salmon, bread cut in hunks, and sweet milk. The tables were bare, unpainted, and as dingy as the floors. Indeed they looked to be a piece of the floor. The crockery was of the cheapest, nicked and sticky, and there were no napkins.

Since that day I have visited many tenement homes. I have been in the homes of New York City's poorest. In none of them did I find less attempt made to humanize

the unlovely sordid surroundings. Even in the home of the drunken Irish mother, who had sold every stick of furniture excepting a broken table and the mattress she and her children huddled on, I saw a picture of the Virgin.

St. Rose's Home for Girls was conducted by a church claiming to follow the teachings of Him who said: "Suffer the little children to come unto Me."

On my remarking to one of the older girls that they all took such dainty helpings, she explained that each child had to clean its plate. That was the rule, now, she said. This seemed such a good rule that I told the table, in a way I imagined to be humorous, that Mr. Hoover would be glad to know how much they were helping him. Though they knew all about Mr. Hoover there was no smile, and I noticed that two of the older girls exchanged glances and lifted their eyebrows.

A minute or so later a slight disturbance at a table behind me attracted my attention. The assistant matron was standing over a little girl, forcing her to eat food left on her plate at lunch, and using her forefinger in the operation. It was the longest and boniest forefinger I had ever seen. And that plate of cold spaghetti was about as appetizing as some of the messes dished up to the waitresses at the Hotel Sea Foam.

Now, I belong to a family noted for good health and perfect digestion. So much so that humorous friends declare we can, one and all, digest flint rocks. Yet I do not believe that I could have swallowed, much less digested, that mass of cold, sloppy, bluish spaghetti.

The victim of this economic tyranny was a delicate little girl of about six years. Her cheeks were colorless, her lips were almost as white, and there were dark circles about her eyes. Glancing around my eyes took in the sordid unloveliness of the whole scene—and the little children with meekly bowed heads, forcing down food which I could see

few if any relished. A lump rose in my throat, and a mist obscured my sight.

How could any woman! How could Miss Pugh! She was not a blonde. As though feeling my stare the assistant matron relinquished her hold on the girl's shoulder, and straightening up, faced me.

"This is Mrs. Bossman's order," she said. "She found it a most satisfactory disciplinary measure in her reformatory work. You knew she had been in that work, didn't you?"

"Ah?" I replied, as my estimate of Mrs. Jefferson Davis' judgment bounded upward. Living to be eighty has its compensations. Perhaps in time I may learn to distrust men who do not tread squarely on their heels.

At dinner that evening the talk was more general than it had been at lunch. The entrance of Mrs. Bossman and Miss Pugh resulted in the same frosty atmosphere. Determined not to finish my meal staring at my plate while I shovelled down food, I fired question after question at the woman with red hair. Amused, and I believe not a little encouraged by my daring, she finally took hold and kept her end of the conversation going.

During the balance of that meal we kept up a steady flow of talk, back and forth, across the table. Not another woman said a word. Even the matron and her assistant stopped whispering to each other. As I now recall it, that conversation included the heavens, the earth, and the waters under the earth. As we were leaving, the red-haired woman slipped her hand through my arm and whispered:

"Come over to my cottage to-morrow when you finish your work. I'd like you to see my children. I have forty little girls."

It was after eleven o'clock the next day when I joined her. Her older girls were at school, and the little tots were

playing in a sand-pile in the yard. She, seated on an up-turned soap-box under the trees, was making tatting.

Chatting with her I learned that she was Miss Jessup, and had an orphaned niece and nephew dependent on her. Having been a saleswoman in Chicago for years, she had, at length, broken away and come to New York, firm in her faith of "bettering" herself.

"The stores were turnin' off salespeople instead of takin' 'em on," she told me, speaking of her efforts to get a position in New York. "I was 'most on my uppers when I heard about this place. The pay ain't so bad, and I just love children. Mrs. Bossman is new, you know. I don't know how long she'll keep me, but as long as she does"—her jaw squared—"I'm goin' to see to it that my forty gets a square deal."

"Among so many I suppose there must be some of the mothers who do not understand the children in their care," I questioned, with the same object that a fisherman throws out a baited hook.

"No, they're all right," she assured me positively. "There isn't one of them who doesn't do her best with her cottage. An' things ain't as easy for us as it used to be, neither." Here she glanced around, including the over-looking windows of her own cottage. Then she added: "Mrs. Bossman believes in what she calls lovin' discipline. She got Miss Pugh here to carry out the discipline."

"Who carries out the loving?"

She flashed a quick smile at me. She was an attractive woman. In spite of her grammar I believe she sprang from educated people.

"Mrs. Bossman," she replied. "Yes, she really does try. You watch the back yard this afternoon after the girls come from school. You'll see Mrs. Bossman walkin' around with one of the older girls—the girl's arm around her waist."



"Mrs. Bossman's waist?" I asked, incredulous.

"Mrs. Bossman is holdin' it there. Sometimes she has to hold real hard." She chuckled. "It's odd what some folks don't know. You can buy the love of a man or a woman—that is if you have their price. But you can't buy the love of a child nor a dog. I know, for I'm one of a large family, and I was brought up in the country. I know children and I know dogs."

After lunch the assistant matron claimed my services. And her manner was such that if by chance I had lost my memory I would have been sure that she had a right to dispose of my time. Conducting me to a cottage of which the mother was taking her afternoon off, she left me in charge. It being a rainy day the children were forced to remain indoors. And I was surprised to find them so easily entertained, or, I should say, that they entertained themselves. Those who did not devote the time to their dolls had some quiet game which they played alone or with one or two others.

By and by, noticing how each child seemed trying to crouch within herself, or huddled against her neighbor, I realized they must be cold—it being a chilly afternoon. When I proposed a romping game, something to warm them all up, they exchanged glances and shook their heads. Then one of the older girls, taking her stand close beside my chair, explained:

"We used to play lovely games—blindman's buff, base, and a lot of others that Mrs. Hoskins taught us, but"—she shrugged her shoulders—"Miss Bossman said we made too much noise, and——"

A little girl seated nearer the door reached over and gave the speaker's apron a sharp pull, at the same time motioning with her head toward the door. Instantly the child who had been talking to me slipped back to her seat on the floor and picked up her doll. For a moment there was

profound silence. Though every one of the little people appeared to be intent on her own play, I felt sure that even the littlest tot was holding her breath.

There was a faint rustle—something on the other side of the closed door had moved. The children exchanged glances but made no sound.

“Wouldn’t you like me to tie your doll’s sash?” I asked the littlest tot.

She was standing by the arm of my chair, her doll’s face downward on my knee, when glancing up I found Miss Pugh entering the door. Of course she was smiling. Women of her type smile even when brushing their teeth.

She explained that when “rushing” by she had dropped in to see how I was getting along. At the word “rush” I again saw the older girls exchange glances—children are not so blind as many of their elders imagine. Being in a rush the assistant matron could remain only a few minutes. The little folks took her going as calmly as they had her entrance.

When supper-time came the older girls whose turn it was to prepare the meal, went about their task without any reminder from me. After setting the tables and drawing up the food from the kitchen on the dumb-waiter, they announced that supper was served. When the others came trooping in they seated the little ones and helped them put on their bibs.

Then, after whispering among themselves, one—perhaps the oldest—called my attention to a plate of cold food, and pointed out the little girl who had failed to eat it at lunch.

Without a word I took the plate and emptied it into the garbage-bucket. For a moment there was not a sound, not a movement. Then all eyes turned and stared at me. Then they stared at each other. A little girl chuckled and rapped softly on the table with her spoon. The next instant every little girl was chuckling and beating softly on the table with her spoon.

It was a subdued demonstration. Every one of these little people understood just what had happened. Also they realized that something unpleasant might happen if it were found out.

Late that afternoon I learned that my room was to be changed—from the cheerful surroundings of the building in which the matron lived to the dingy desolation of the cottage in which I had spent that afternoon. This information was not given me by either the matron or her assistant. I was told by the girl who was to change with me. She had come to St. Rose, so she explained, for the purpose of training for an institutional worker, and had been helping Mrs. Hoskins, for whom I had substituted that afternoon. She didn't like it, and neither did I.

After supper Mrs. Bossman smilingly informed me that I had managed the children so charmingly that she had decided to change me to that cottage. She was sure I would be of great assistance to the mother, so much more useful to St. Rose. It really did seem a pity, she went on, to waste my genius for managing children—yes, it was nothing short of genius—on her small correspondence.

Glad to be thrown more closely with the children, and sincerely wishing to be of use to the institution, I agreed to the change. Though conscious that several of the workers had watched us closely during Mrs. Bossman's explanation, I did not dream that any of them excepting, perhaps, the girl was interested.

On going to my room with the intention of packing and being ready to move to the cottage the first thing in the morning, I found Miss Jessup waiting for me. Her face was pale, and I noticed for the first time that her mouth had a very stern expression.

"Did you come here to take Mrs. Hoskins' job?" she demanded as soon as the door closed behind me.

"Mrs. Hoskins!" I exclaimed, so surprised that for a

moment my memory failed me. "Who on earth is Mrs. Hoskins?"

Her mouth became more stern.

"The mother whose place you took this afternoon. You never met her because she won't take her meals here. She takes 'em with the children—eats with 'em same as she would with her own. She got the idea that it makes the children feel more like home, havin' her eat at the table with 'em. There ain't no doubt about it givin' 'em better manners, though Mrs. Bossman says it's not good discipline."

Miss Jessup then assured me that Mrs. Hoskins was the best mother at St. Rose. She was a widow and had lost her husband and two children before she was thirty. Ever since, for more than twenty years, she had been mothering motherless girls at St. Rose. The children under her care were the best trained, received the highest marks in their school, both in deportment and studies, and they were, one and all, devoted to their "mother."

But Mrs. Hoskins had not co-operated as cordially in carrying out Mrs. Bossman's theories as that lady wished. One of these theories was forcing a child to eat all food left on its plate at the previous meal. She also objected to the children doing all the housework. She thought some work too heavy even for the older girls.

Mrs. Bossman intended, according to Miss Jessup, to have me act as Mrs. Hoskins' assistant for a couple of weeks, or as long as it might take for me to learn the ropes. Then she would discharge Mrs. Hoskins and install me as "mother."

"I ain't sayin' you wouldn't make a good mother," Miss Jessup wound up. "I dunno but what I believe you would make a first-class one. What I aims at is to get you to wait. I'll be movin' on soon—goin' back to Chicago. If you would wait and take my cottage. I don't want to see

Mrs. Hoskins turned out. It would break her heart. That's a fact. None of us wants her turned out. I'll go at the end of the month if—if you want me to."

"May the Lord love you, woman!" I exclaimed, more moved than I cared to show. "I don't want either Mrs. Hoskins' job or yours. I wouldn't have either as a gracious gift."

"What you goin' to do? You've got to move into her cottage in the mornin'. When the time comes—when Mrs. Bossman discharges Mrs. Hoskins——"

"She'll never discharge her on my account," I interrupted. "As for what I am going to do—how I'm going to get out of it, I haven't the slightest idea. But you let me sleep on it—you'll know in the morning."

The next morning when I went down to breakfast I took my bag with me. After the meal, the matron not having made her appearance, I bade her assistant good-by. Beyond saying that Mrs. Bossman's methods did not appeal to me a statement seemed unnecessary.

## CHAPTER IX

### RODMAN HALL: CHILDREN'S HOME

BACK again on the now deserted top floor of the rooming-house, I turned once more to the help-wanted column. An advertisement about which Alice and I had often speculated during the winter caught my eye:

"A philanthropic institution for children is in need of the services of a gentlewoman. One who prefers the life of a comfortable home with refined surroundings to a large salary."

Though well along toward the middle of the day I decided to try my luck. Calling up an address mentioned in the advertisement, it did not greatly surprise me to learn that the institution was Rodman House. I had long been acquainted, through the newspapers, with this institution. In all these "write-ups" the statement that the children in the home were surrounded and cared for exclusively by women of education and refinement was always conspicuously emphasized.

To the wages, fifteen dollars a month, I did not give a second thought. Having bought a pair of new shoes with some of my earnings at Sutton House, I felt quite independent of money. To tell the truth so deep was my sympathy for the class of children cared for in the Rodman Hall, I would gladly have given my services. Also, I had met Mrs. Howard, who was the life and soul of the work. Familiar as I was with her long and persistent struggles to put the institution on a sound financial basis, I held her in high esteem.

Speaking to her over the telephone, I told her exactly who I was, and stated honestly my reasons for wishing the position—my sympathy with her plans, and my desire to be closely associated with the children for the sake of my work as a writer.

She was even more persistent than Mrs. Bossman in urging me to come at once—that afternoon. Confident that I had found a place in which it would be greatly to my advantage to remain the entire summer, I hurried back to the rooming-house and dived once more into the business of packing. Such an accumulation! Being the last of those who had spent the past seven months on the top floor, my neighbors on leaving had presented me with everything he or she did not think worth while taking with them, yet considered too good to be thrown away—the Press was continually cautioning persons against waste of any sort, while every man, woman, and child throughout the country appeared to be rushing around gathering all conceivable articles to send to Belgium.

Perhaps my neighbors thought of me as the Belgium of that top floor. They acted like it.

Mrs. Wilkins gave me a new Panama hat, the brim of which had been cut by a careless trimmer.

“They was throwin’ it in the trash-box when I seen ’em,” she explained, on presenting the rescued head-covering to me. “All you have to do is to line the brim, turn it up on the side or behind or before—whichever way most becomes you in the face—and fix the trimmin’ so the cut won’t show. It’ll look as good as a twenty-five-dollar hat when you get through.”

On the strength of having given me such an expensive hat she asked me to keep her cooking utensils and bread-box. And as an eleventh-hour reminder, hung her winter coat and furs in my tiny little wardrobe—all to be kept until she “found time” to send for them.

Alice, of course, left behind all the household equipments gathered by the two of us. One of her winter hats, being too large to pack in her trunk, and not considered of sufficient value or becomingness to warrant a special shipment, also fell to my lot. And along with it a gas-lamp, a camp-stool, two writing-desk sets, a soiled Indian blanket—all Christmas presents.

The little organist likewise bequeathed to me a number of Christmas presents, along with her books and sheet-music too ragged to pack. The restaurant owner gave me a metal flask containing about a pint of whiskey, about which he declared: "'Tain't the kind a man would drink—not twice if he knew it. But I thought, being a lady, you might like to have it around."

Needless to state I thanked him graciously. Just as I did the reporter when he carted in twenty odd books, a file of daily newspapers, two sofa-pillows, and a moth-eaten slumber-robe. The books, sofa-pillows and the robe had been sent him at that season of the year when the world goes mad on the subject of giving—give wisely if they know how and have the money, but give they must.

A few days after the newspaperman's departure a bamboo walking-cane with a wabby head, a silk umbrella minus one rib, and a grease-paint outfit was presented to me by the man in the front skylight room.

"I used to belong to the profession," he told me, explaining the paints. "Now that I am a promoter I don't need it. And this umbrella—one of the ribs is broken—but it's silk—heavy silk. I saved it to have it mended. One of the companies of which I'm a director cut a melon the other day, so I don't need to use a mended umbrella."

As I was still playing the part of Polly Preston my trunks were in storage. As a first step toward packing my collection of remembrances I hurried to Third Avenue, and after considerable searching among the groceries I



finally discovered three suitable boxes. Persuasion supplemented by a one-dollar bill induced the owner to allow his errand boy to take them to the rooming-house in his hand-cart. Of course the errand boy got an additional quarter of a dollar.

In the smallest of the three boxes I packed my precious new shoes and the other articles to be taken to Rodman Hall. But turn and twist and pound as I might and did, I could not cram all the objects to which I had fallen heir into the two large boxes. With many explanations I presented the overflow to Molly, the negro maid. Leaving the house the next morning I saw them, the box of grease-paint and all the rest, in the garbage-can at the foot of the front steps.

Evidently Molly had not been receiving private communications from either Brand Whitlock or Mr. Hoover. How comfortable it must be not to carry the woes of the world on your shoulders!

After the hot and dusty streets of New York Rodman Hall, reached after a considerable run by the Subway, seemed a bit of heaven. Seated back from the country road and among the trees the large house, which was of some dark shade almost the color of the trunks of the trees, appeared to have grown there—not built in the usual way. There was no lawn, the trees were not overlarge and did not impress one as having been carefully planted or pruned. Like the house they appeared to have just grown there and to have enjoyed the process.

Even the gravel on the wide driveway that curved from the public road to the front door had the look of being to that spot born. And though the dash of color to the left of the house, a little behind, was made by a crimson Rambler, there was no suggestion of the artificial. It was a comfortably homey place without a suggestion of institution. I congratulated myself on having found such a

place in which to spend the summer—surrounded by children of the particular class cared for in the Rodman Hall.

Mrs. Howard received me pleasantly and while showing me over the house she explained the work and recounted the incident that had led her to undertake the care of this type of defective children. Though having read the same thing in the "write-ups" of the Rodman Hall I was pleased to have it authenticated. Out on the grounds she pointed out with considerable pride an adjoining tract of land which she said contained sixteen acres, and which she had just purchased for the institution.

That afternoon one of the institution's employees invited me to use her typewriter to write a letter home, notifying my family of my change of address. While doing this we carried on quite a conversation. With considerable gusto she informed me that she had been for years private secretary to a Mr. Johnson Bascom, a high official of a large banking corporation. So confidential had been her relations with her chief, she proudly assured me, that as soon as the "now famous investigation" was mooted he sent her abroad.

"It's not every girl that's spent a year in Europe," she told me, her eyes sparkling with pleasure. "And I stopped at the best hotels, too—had all my expenses paid, and my salary besides."

"Then you could have given valuable testimony?" I asked.

"I certainly could've done that, and they knew it, too," she boasted.

"You were not afraid to take their money?"

"I should say not. They were not giving me more than my absence was worth to them. My friends tell me I was a fool not to have made them pay me more—when you are young you haven't got much sense. I thought if I could spend a year abroad I'd be it."

"Odd variety of it to be second in command of an institution for young children!" was my mental comment, and I turned back to pecking on her typewriter.

That evening after eight o'clock I passed through the pantry on my way to the village to mail my letter. The man who was washing dishes, work that I would have to do the next day, was still hard at work. He told me that it would be more than an hour before he would finish.

Overtaking one of the attendants also on her way to the village, and finding her a companionable woman, I joined her. During our walk she told me that our fellow workers had looked me over, and decided that I "might" remain two days. That nettled me a bit, and I assured her of my intention to remain several weeks, perhaps the entire summer.

She inquired if Mrs. Howard had given me the schedule of my work. It so happened that an assistant had handed me two typed pages just as I was leaving to mail my letters. Though at first sight it did seem formidable I felt sure that by a little systematizing it would be well within my strength. Indeed my faith in Mrs. Howard was such that I resented the suggestion that she would overtax any worker.

Turning the conversation I soon learned that my companion was the widow of a well-known college professor. She had been "enticed," she said, by an advertisement similar to the one I had answered.

"I did try to be careful," she assured me, "because giving up the little I had in the way of a home meant so much to me. Once before I had been tricked by a woman. This time, to make sure that everything was all right, I came out to Rodman Hall and talked with Mrs. Howard. The place is so beautiful and that woman talked so fair I felt sure that I had found a comfortable home with congenial work for the balance of my life." She shook her head, was silent for a few seconds, then added: "If I could I

would leave to-morrow. As it is I've just got to stick it out until I get money enough to pay my way back to the West to my people."

"But the other women!" I remonstrated, convinced that the woman was exaggerating conditions. "Surely refined, educated women——"

"Educated!" she scoffed. "Excepting Miss —— (naming the woman with whom I had talked) I don't believe a one of them can do more than write her name. They are all foreigners. Do you know who she is?"

Admitting unwillingly that this woman had told me of having been the secretary of a man mixed up in some financial scandal, I added:

"But surely you don't imagine that Mrs. Howard knows."

"Don't imagine she knows! I know she knows," the clergyman's widow declared. "That woman is one of Mrs. Howard's standbys. Being an educated woman and fairly presentable, Mrs. Howard pushes her forward on any and all occasions. Did Mrs. Howard introduce you to any of the nurses?"

I shook my head.

"Of course not. She wants to keep up as long as possible her idea about the children being cared for by gentlewomen!" The scorn with which she pronounced gentlewomen! "The nurses are regular Irish biddies, every one of them."

Much to my surprise on returning from the village a few minutes before nine I discovered that the sheets had been taken off my bed. They were not in the room. As everybody in the house appeared to be asleep and I did not care to awaken them, sleeping without sheets was my only alternative. The mattress did not look any too fresh, so I covered it with my two extra nighties.

My room proved to be a little hot-box. Finally I dozed off and was suddenly awakened by a mighty banging and

beating. The night-watchman was cleaning up the kitchen, which was next my room, and he informed me that he had to do it every night between twelve and two. Once he had finished I again dropped off to sleep.

Another mighty thumping and bumping brought me straight up in bed. The man who tended the furnace was busy getting it ready for the cook. It was only a little after four o'clock, but being light out-of-doors I decided to get up. It was then that I discovered that I was expected, as a matter of course, to wash my face and do any other bathing of which I might feel the need, in the kitchen-sink.

"Evidently," I remarked to myself, "when a gentlewoman meets with reverses she not only loses her sense of modesty, but her desire to keep herself clean. What next?"

After sweeping and dusting the piazzas, the parlor, the schoolrooms, the reception-room, and the stairs, as per schedule, I entered the boys' dormitory. While downstairs I had heard a voice that seemed to my ears very like that of Mrs. Howard scolding some one. Now I found her in this dormitory where three nurses were getting the more helpless of the boys out of bed and dressing them.

She, Mrs. Howard, reminded me of an ill-tempered dog barking, snarling, snapping at everything in sight. When I entered the dormitory she left off nagging the three nurses and turned on me.

"You're not beginning very well this morning, Miss Porter," she snarled.

As it had been some little time since I had looked at the clock I did not know but what I might be a little late in reaching that dormitory. But I did know that I had been working like a horse since before five-thirty. Not caring to have words with any one, Mrs. Howard least of all, I passed on into the adjoining sleeping-porch.

Here I began by picking up the night-clothes of the chil-

dren who, already up and out, had dropped them on the floor. This done I opened up the beds—all of them wet and two of them soiled.

Because of a state law, articles in such a condition cannot be sent to a laundry—they must first be rinsed and dried. I was just beginning the unpleasant task of rinsing preparatory to carrying them, mattresses and bedclothes, to hang on the lines in the back yard, when Mrs. Howard entered.

“You’re not beginning very well this morning, Miss Porter,” she again told me, and her tone was unmistakably intended to be insulting.

My respect for Mrs. Howard was sincere. Though I had been at Rodman Hall less than twenty-four hours I had seen enough to feel convinced that the children were all well fed, comfortably housed and clothed, and tenderly mothered. The discomforts of my room and the huge amount of work scheduled for me were matters of secondary importance. I felt sure that by a judicious use of patience and tact both would be altered to my satisfaction. Determined not to be drawn into a dispute with a woman for whom I had such sincere respect, I held my tongue. But as I continued to work I couldn’t help wondering what had happened that could make her so far forget herself.

“Where were you last night?” she demanded, and glancing up I found her following close at my heels. “You were not in your room at nine o’clock. I took the sheets off your bed. Where were you?”

A child could have knocked me down, I was so amazed. That Mrs. Howard should use such an insulting tone when addressing me was enough of a shock. That she would be guilty of such an act of spiteful tyranny as taking the sheets off the bed of an employee was unbelievable. I stared at her, stupidly silent.

“And you’re not beginning so well, now, are you?” she

repeated a third time, and if possible her tone was even more insultingly taunting.

That loosened my tongue.

"I may not have begun so well, Mrs. Howard," I told her as I unbuttoned my apron. "But I shall improve as I go along."

Having taken off my apron I handed it to her.

"What is this for?" she demanded, staring at the apron.

"What do you mean by this?"

"It means that you are to send me to the nearest railroad-station, and at once."

Then I told her what I thought of her, and my words came straight from the shoulder. I reminded her that she had hired me as a gentlewoman, yet she had not provided me a place in which I could so much as bathe in privacy. If she had not sufficient money to pay decent wages to workers; I asked why she had bought that additional ten acres of land. I reminded her that she already had more land than could be used by the class of children cared for at Rodman Hall.

Furthermore, I told her that if ever I saw her advertisement, similar to the one by which she had trapped the professor's widow and myself, I would go to see the owner of the newspaper in which it appeared. I would show the schedule of work she had mapped out for me, tell him of other women whom she had decoyed, and ask why he published the advertisements of such fakers.

It was then that Mrs. Howard did everything except offer bodily violence to induce me to return that schedule.

On returning to New York I took the schedule at once to a reputable agency for domestic servants. Pretending that I was acting in behalf of a friend who lived in the country, I showed the two typed pages to the manager, and asked for a maid who would do that work for fifteen dollars a month. The manager glared at me. She assured

me that it was impossible for one woman to do so much work even in a twenty-four-hour day. She didn't exactly show me the door, but the manner in which she looked at it was pointed.

At the next agency the manager was more polite. She advised me to induce my friend to get three girls. Even then, she explained, my friend would have to pay the girls at least twenty dollars a month each.

"We don't have as many greenhorns coming over as we used to," she told me, "and even those we do have demand more money. Twenty dollars a month is very little these days even for the poorest servant."

The woman in charge at the next agency brusquely informed me that she had too much respect for herself to offer such a job to any girl, even the most ignorant immigrant. My friend, she added, should be forced to do all that work herself, then she might understand why she couldn't get a girl.

At the fifth agency I was treated as a half-witted creature to whom the manager was forced by her own self-respect to be polite. Evidently, she told me, I had no experience with housework. Otherwise I would know that it would be impossible for a human being, man or woman, however skilled, to accomplish so much work in one day. If my friend's home was near a popular beach, or offered an equally desirable summer attraction, she might get me two women. Wages? Thirty-five dollars a month each, perhaps more.

Determined to give Mrs. Howard a square deal I called on my Y. W. C. A. friend. After reading the advertisement and the schedule, she computed the beds in the four dormitories and their sleeping-porches.

"Forty-two beds!" she exclaimed. "Why making forty-two beds is a day's work, a hard day's work in itself. A hotel chambermaid seldom has more than twenty-five beds."



When I explained that most of these beds were always wet, many of them always soiled, her surprise became indignation.

"That woman is worse than any slave-driver!" she exclaimed. "Oh, yes, she is! The idea of expecting any woman to care for forty-two such beds, carry the bed-clothes and mattresses down two flights of stairs and hang them on lines in the back yard to dry. When they do dry you must cart them back again and make the beds. Something should be done to that woman. I wish the law could reach her."

Again turning to the schedule she read to the end of the two closely typed legal-cap pages.

"Besides caring for the dormitories and sleeping-porches, you had to sweep and dust two piazzas, the parlor, reception-room, two schoolrooms, and two flights of stairs—beating all rugs in the back yard once a week, or as often as necessary." She glanced up at me and shook her head, then went back to the typed sheets. "You were to help serve all three meals, wash the dinner dishes, and keep the pantries in order."

"In short, I was to have been parlor-maid, dining-room girl, pantry-maid, and chambermaid—a sort of four in one person," I agreed. "If only I had——"

"This is no laughing matter," she reproved me sharply. "The reduced gentlewoman is one of the most serious problems the Association has to deal with—how to help her help herself, how to make her decently self-supporting. Ninety-nine cases out of a hundred such women are as ignorant and trustful as a baby. That is why Mrs. Howard's advertisements are so dangerous. You must give that woman a lesson that she will not forget soon."

Surprised by her vehemence, I turned and looked at her.

"You must do it," she repeated, her tone and manner both serious.

"But how?" I exclaimed, then reminded her: "I threatened to expose her to the newspaper if ever I saw her advertisement again. That's all I can do."

"No, it is not," she contradicted. "You can make her reimburse you for every penny that trip cost you—your packing and moving your things to storage. Every penny. That's the only way to touch a woman of her type—through her pocketbook. She has no heart. She doesn't care a rap for those children except as a means unto her end—to glorify herself. She intends that institution to be her monument. She will wring or squeeze every dollar she can from every person she can in order to add one stone to that monument. You can help the Association—we are always coming up against such women. It is your duty to do all you can to prevent other women falling into her trap."

Because I could not agree with my friend—her estimate of Mrs. Howard—I promised to sleep on her advice and let her know what I finally decided to do.

Mrs. Howard, as I then saw her, had a single-track mind—a disease more common than is generally admitted. Absorbed by Rodman Hall she had thought of no other subject, had no other interest for so long that her mind had got into a groove, just one groove. She could not see, much less realize, anything outside that groove, neither to the side of it, above it, nor below it. The interest of Rodman Hall and that alone was considered.

When, after sleeping on it for several nights, I finally decided to follow my friend's advice, I felt sure Mrs. Howard would refuse to reimburse me. I itemized the expenditures. She would write me that she was in no way responsible for my having to buy three boxes, nor for my paying a twenty-five-cent tip. The amount I had paid for the cartage and storage of my goods, she would insist, I felt sure, was none of her business. She would protest that her advertisement was in good faith, and as she had already paid the wages

due me for two days, and my railroad ticket to and from New York, she would pay me no more.

Tuesday morning, my second day in the loan department of the T. Z. Trust Company, as I was leaving the rooming-house I met the postman on the steps, and he handed me Mrs. Howard's reply. That reply now lies before me. It is written in long hand on the official paper of Rodman Hall. In the copy that follows only the proper names have been changed.

"Rodman Hall, June 25, 1917.

"DEAR MISS PORTER:

"I agree with you that I made a mistake in trying to give this work to a gentlewoman. It will never turn out as I had hoped it would. Almost every day some one comes to me for help and the only work I have I offer.

"Dormitory work and dish-washing, it is true, is not what gentlewomen would select as a general thing to do, yet if one should decide to do it rather than be out of work, I feel sure the duties would be well performed.

"I am writing Mrs. Jones, the assistant secretary, to send you a check for \$4.37.

Yours truly,

W. C. HOWARD."

On the Subway on my way down town again I gave this letter its first reading. It not only greatly surprised me, but it greatly puzzled me. On rereading it an exclamation burst from my lips.

Any one reading her letter would imagine that I had complained of the character of the work assigned me—dormitory work and dish-washing. Also, that out of work I had appealed to her for help. If she received appeals for help "almost every day," why was it necessary for her to advertise in the help-wanted columns? During that winter

and spring Alice and I had noticed her advertisement fully one dozen times.

Some day I shall frame this letter of Mrs. Howard's together with her advertisement and the two typewritten pages of legal foolscap, the schedule of work.

## CHAPTER X

### TRUSTED WITH BILLIONS, PAID IN MILLS

WHEN discussing with my Y. W. C. A. friend my experiences at the Rodman Hall, she said:

“Why don't you give our employment department a trial? I believe you'd have a wider choice. Besides, you might help the Association a lot—reporting conditions at the places where you work.”

Semiphilanthropy again! was my mental exclamation. The department store and Sea Foam were the property of philanthropists. The overdressed woman and her “placement bureau” was a semiphilanthropic annex. St. Rose and Rodman Hall! Now the Y. W. C. A. employment department. Semiphilanthropies!

With a sigh so sincere that it seemed hypocrisy to suppress it, I promised to be on time the following morning, go up to the seventh floor and register. I took my leave and walked dejectedly back to the rooming-house. There was no hope in me; my enthusiasm had passed away as a thing that had never been. I was to have my faith in human nature tried by another semiphilanthropy.

True to my word but expecting the worst, I arrived, was whisked to the seventh floor by the elevator, registered, and promptly received two shocks. First, not being charged a fee. Second, being assured that I was not an unskilled worker. Far from it. The woman at the desk named so many lines of work in which I would be received with open arms that it made me dizzy—banks, brokers, insurance, real estate, and a half-hundred more.

Then she asked which of the fields she had named especially appealed to me.

"Well," I hesitated, forced by her eyes and her business-like manner to give some sort of an answer, "since you think I would fit in so many holes, suppose you let me try one in which I will release a man for service."

She smiled and shook her head.

"That's not much of a choice. In every vacancy I have named you will be releasing a man—one who has enlisted or been drafted. Under normal conditions none of these people would come to us. They'd apply to the Y. M., or some agency making a specialty of educated men. Take the T. Z. Trust Company, one of the largest banking institutions in the country. If you go there you'll be the first woman; heretofore they have employed men exclusively.

"But what could I do in a bank? I've never been beyond the drawing and deposit windows. That could not be called bank training."

"Bank employees are not produced by training but by experience. Suppose you go down and let them judge of your fitness. Besides bookkeepers and stenographers they have openings for intelligent, educated women. I'll give you a card."

And give me a card she did. Within an hour after entering the employment rooms, without having spent a cent, I was on my way to see the treasurer of one of the largest banking institutions in the Wall Street district. Mr. Morton, the treasurer, being in the loan department, I was given a chair beside his desk, and asked to wait.

"I dreamed I dwelt in marble halls," I hummed to myself.

If I should be employed here I would certainly work in marble halls. The bank, as far as I could see on that floor, was beautiful marble and bronze. Wonderful! The huge flat-top desk beside me and the chair in which I sat were both exquisitely grained mahogany. And there were

five other desks and numerous chairs just like them on the officers' floor—at the front of the bank and raised one step above the general floor level.

While I was busy studying the faces of the men at the other desk Mr. Morton arrived without my being conscious of his approach. He spoke to me, and looking up I beheld a long, tall man, with becomingly gray hair. Now I like gray hair, and I also like eyes that meet mine calmly and as a matter of course when the owner is talking to me. There's a difference in eyes—eyes that play hop, skip, and jump, trying to see everything, look everywhere except into the eyes of the person addressing them; eyes that stare at you as though wishing to jump out and snatch your eyes bald-headed, and eyes that have a predisposition to study the toes of shoes and the figures on the carpet, darting up once in a while to catch you off your guard, and perhaps murder you.

My interview with Mr. Morton was encouraging. He felt sure, he said, that if women of my "attainments" would offer their services they would be gladly accepted by the banks and similar corporations. As he saw conditions, if the war continued as long as persons in a position to know appeared to expect it would, half of the work of the Trust Company would have to be done by women.

"Everybody don't agree with me," he added. "Some think it unnecessary, my employing women here. Some of our men enlisted, many were called in the first draft, others will be caught in later drafts. The situation is serious, and I want to meet it."

On learning that he was a Princeton graduate, I decided to give him a trial as a boss. Fortunately for me, he decided to give me a trial. After taking the names of my references and some more general conversation, he asked me to report for duty the next Monday morning.

On my return trip up-town I took stock of myself. Pat

myself on the back as I might, I was forced to admit that my clothes, in their present condition, were not suited to a dweller in marble halls. Determined not to take my trunks from storage, I was even more set on continuing to live on my wages. What to do I did not know.

Being Friday I resolved to loaf until Monday. Leaving the surface car at Store Beautiful, I proceeded to carry out my resolve—loaf. Perhaps while doing so a solution of my problem might develop. But an hour spent in roaming through the most beautiful department store in the world only added to my conviction—the unfitness of my clothes to marble halls.

When I again faced the world on Broadway I was still struggling over the puzzle—how to get a dress suited to marble halls. Wool was prohibitive not only in price but because it was needed by our soldiers and the destitute Belgians; silk was far above the contents of my pocket-book, and cotton was winging its way upward so fast that I might be forced to join an aviation corps to get enough of it for a frock.

There was Fourteenth Street to be investigated—Fourteenth Street has solved many financial problems. So in and out of that wide street I nosed, like a pointer dog hunting for game ardently wished for though unscented. Finally down in a basement I came to a point—I actually pointed.

“That piece of cloth over there—what’s the price of it?”

The saleswoman looked at the cloth, then back at me. Her expression was of a person who had answered the same question many times.

“There’s only five yards, and we can’t get any more like it,” she told me.

“What’s the price?”

“Oh, it’s cheap enough,” and taking the cloth from the shelf she spread it before me on the counter. “One dollar



for the piece. We could get three times the money if there was enough of it for anything. It's only twenty-seven inches wide."

"I'll take it."

On leaving that counter with the parcel in my hand I hurried to the pattern department and there spent twenty cents. Fortunately, among the ruffraff left behind by Alice and the hat-trimmer there were remnants of several spools of white cotton thread and a few inches of dark-brown cotton poplin.

Early the next morning I trudged up to the Y. W. C. A. with all the spool cotton and the scrap of poplin in my bag, and a neatly folded parcel under my arm. When I quitted the sewing-room late that afternoon I carried with me a dress in which at that time it would have been equally appropriate to visit a tenement or dine in a palace. Besides being patriotic it was also the height of fashion—cotton khaki, severely tailored, with a long tie of dark brown.

Up to that time, aside from room-rent and food, my expenditures had been limited to one pair of shoes, seven dollars; one union suit, fifty-nine cents; one picture show, ten cents; two evenings at church, twenty-five cents in the plate each time. I admit that such an existence of grinding toil is only possible to a girl of character. Polly Preston is a girl of character. So also were a large majority of those with whom I had worked. Had such not been the case millions instead of thousands would have fallen by the wayside, succumbing to the conditions amid which women were forced to work before the entrance of our country into the World War. At that time the life of a working woman was of no more value than that of a dog. Yet had our working women ceased to be virtuous our country must have perished.

Now I have come to one of the two most disagreeable experiences of my four years. Perhaps the hardest for

me to describe with equal justice to myself and the people among whom I worked.

On reporting at the T. Z. Trust Company at the time appointed by Mr. Morton, I learned that though he had not arrived he had instructed his secretary how to dispose of me. When she told me that Mr. Morton had decided to place me in the loan department, it was evident that she expected me to be greatly pleased. I did my best not to disappoint her. But to tell the truth the name meant as much to me as an inscription over a Hindu temple. And I could have conducted services in a Hindu temple as intelligently as I did the work in that department during my first few days.

After passing through several gates opening into private compartments fenced off by heavy bronze wire netting we entered the loan department. Once there I saw that it was at the rear of the bank, and that it had two windows similar to those of a bank for the use of customers. In the way of furniture there were two flat-topped desks, a large one and a smaller, two bookkeeper's desks, a large iron safe on wheels, a ticker and its basket, and several chairs.

The loan clerk, Mr. Hartley, and his first assistant, Dennis Hoolagan, sat facing each other at the larger of the two flat-topped desks. At the smaller flat top, which was in one corner, sat a young man, Tom Turpin, tall, blond, and carefully groomed. In an adjoining compartment, at a large table, was a still younger man, Dick Ware. And in yet another adjoining compartment was the stenographer and typist, whose name no one considered worth mentioning. Mr. Hartley and Dick Ware, I soon learned, were of American stock. Hoolagan was a son of Irish immigrants, while Turpin's parents had come as immigrants from that country from which Americans get their coachmen and butlers, but never their cooks.

I have already stated how I chanced to go to the T. Z. Trust Company. When I proposed to release a man for service I did not for a moment imagine that I was doing anything remarkable. Indeed it seemed a very small thing to offer my country my untrained services since all my men-folks had enlisted and were prepared to give their lives. Because the press and men and women in public life were urging American women to follow the example of the women of England and France, step into the working world and release men for service at the front, I did it. While I did not expect to be commended, neither did I so much as dream that any fellow employee would do his best to render my position unpleasant.

That is exactly what Tom Turpin and Dennis Hoolagan did attempt—to render my position in the loan department of the T. Z. Trust Company intolerable.

On that first day, the ceremony of introductions over, Mr. Hartley explained that I was to learn to do the work done by Dick Ware and Tom Turpin. These young men, Mr. Hartley informed me, had enlisted, and might be called at any time. Hoolagan had been drafted, but because of a physical defect would not be taken by the first draft. He, Mr. Hartley, then placed a chair for me at Turpin's elbow. I was to begin by learning Turpin's work.

Never in my life had I felt even a slight interest in stocks and bonds. Now I found myself sitting cheek by jowl with a ticker. My chair was so close to the thing that the tape got the habit of running down my collar instead of into the basket. Any one can judge how much at home I felt.

Even that first day I had a feeling of discomfort that I had never experienced in any of my former positions. My memory of the forenoon of that, my first day, is of a blurred puzzle—there were so many things the meaning of which I had not the faintest conception. On my return from

lunch I found only Turpin and Hoolagan in the office. My chair was nowhere in sight. I placed my hand on Mr. Hartley's chair.

"Better not do that!" Turpin cried. "Hart don't like anybody to sit in his chair."

"Who has moved my chair?" I questioned. No answer. Both men appeared to be too engrossed by their work to hear. After a few minutes, puzzled but thinking perhaps it was intended as a joke, I asked: "Where am I to sit?"

Another wait.

"There's a stool," Turpin told me, pointing over his shoulder to a high stool at the bookkeeper's desk in the far corner.

The stool was not an enticing seat, but not dreaming that any offense was intended I never dreamed of taking offense. Going over I perched myself on the stool and busied myself trying to learn how to manipulate a little machine used to make out checks. This moving of my chair was repeated the following day along with numerous other acts of petty spite. Having always been cordially received I did not at all understand.

It took days for me even to suspect that I was not a welcomed addition to the department. Turpin was, of course, the man whose acts aroused this suspicion. His method of instructing me had, from the first, seemed to me peculiar. When pretending to show me how to make out the reports sent from the loan department to various officers of the bank, he would be laboriously adding or subtracting a few figures, then suddenly he would throw himself back in his chair, heave a sigh of extreme exasperation, and shout at me.

Though this puzzled and embarrassed me from the first, I did not for a moment think it was done with malice aforethought. Being repeated so often, I finally began to question myself—why should I, when not allowed to take any part in the work in hand, be howled at? Now,

I am not quite a fool. It did not require a great length of time for me to discover that Turpin's fits of exasperation and loud talking only occurred when Mr. Morton, Mr. Hartley, or some one of the vice-presidents of the bank was in hearing.

On my inquiring, quite casually, one day of Turpin what he thought of Mr. Morton's idea of putting women in the positions left vacant by men going to the front, I got what he would have called "a line" on his behavior.

"We all know that business has got to make out with women somehow," he replied patronizingly. "This bank along with the rest. What we complain about is Morton's giving us an untrained woman. You've never had any office training."

"None," I agreed. "I told Mr. Morton I had had no experience in office work. He thought that being a college woman——"

"College!" he exclaimed contemptuously. "What's that good for? I'd have gone to college if I hadn't known it would be throwing away time. As soon as I finished the high school—graduated, of course—I came here."

"How long have you been in the loan department?" I inquired.

"More than two years. You can take it from me it's a man-size job. No woman, much less an untrained woman, can swing it."

"The work is very hard," I agreed, with a deep and insincere sigh. I thought then, and I have never changed my opinion, that a conscientious girl of sixteen could do all that I ever saw him attempt.

"You bet it's hard!" he agreed with a beaming smile.

"The bank will miss you," I assured him, doing my best to make my eyes look round and innocent.

"Miss me!" he cried with enthusiasm. "They'll know when I'm gone; you see if they don't."

From then on I followed that young man's lead so suc-

cessfully that I am convinced that the loan clerk was amazed to find after Turpin and Ware left that I actually knew that two and two made four. Turpin taught me nothing. He would not even tell me how he got the figures for making out the daily report of business done in the department.

To Mr. Morton, to Mr. Hartley, and two courteous men in the bookkeeping department I owe all that I know about the inside of a bank and the world of finance. Mr. Morton explained the how and why of a bank balance. By teaching me to read the ticker-tape he interested me in stocks and bonds, and the part played by the Wall Street market in the business of the country.

The two bookkeepers showed me from which of their books Turpin got the figures about which he had made such a mystery. It was as easy as rolling off a log—making out the reports over which Turpin used to sweat and swear—once I had learned from which books to get the figures. A ten-year-old child could have done all the subtracting and adding—that's all it was, simple addition and subtraction. A man-size job!

To Mr. Hartley I am indebted for much more. He not only taught me enough to enable me to swing my job, but he revolutionized my ideas of men—men in general, business men in particular.

Strange as it now seems, before going to work in the T. Z. I had believed that every business man spent the best part of his time while down-town loafing—in a gentlemanly way, of course, but loafing. Such ideas came to me direct from the wives of the men. Among my circle of intimate acquaintances there are about fifty young married women. The husband of each of these women works to support his family. Of the whole fifty I do not believe there is one who does not suspect her husband of loafing, or having a sort of good time generally during the period known as business hours.

Let any one of them wish to go out of an evening and she proceeds to make her arrangements—always including her husband. If he demurs, expresses a wish to remain at home, she reminds him that it has been a week, or perhaps as much as a month, since they have spent an evening away from home. It's all very well for him, going to his office every day, but how about her, looking after the children and directing the servants? She must have some sort of recreation, take some rest. It is a one-sided argument, and always ends the same way—the husband takes his wife out.

This is not selfishness on the part of these women. It is because they really do not know that business is another name for work, hard work. I did not know until I went to the T. Z. And how hard those men did work! All day long, and when stocks went off, far into the night. Never a murmur, never a complaint. The hardest worker of them all was Mr. Hartley.

For a short time after Turpin departed I enjoyed my work in spite of the fact that it was a great nervous strain, and a greater tax on my eyes—continually reading such small figures under electric lights. Then Mr. Hartley went off for a short vacation, and Hoolagan got his chance to fight a woman, who in his stupidity he imagined had her "eye" on his job.

His first method was "correcting" my daily report of the business transacted in our department and those of our branches. It was my duty to make out this report, get it signed by the loan clerk, and into the hands of a certain vice-president not later than eleven o'clock. When Mr. Hartley was in the office I would place the report on his desk; he would glance over it, make sure it was correct, and then sign it. I would then hand it to a messenger who would deliver it to the vice-president. It had become such a matter of routine that I used to ring for the messenger on my way to Mr. Hartley's desk.

Hoolagan stopped that. There was one day when he spoiled ten copies of the same report, pretending that my figures needed correction. This might have continued until Mr. Hartley's return had it not been that the bookkeepers discovered so many mistakes in Hoolagan's figures that they laughed him out of court.

The truth of the matter was that the man did not know how to add or subtract correctly. Having always had kind, hard-working Mr. Hartley to go over his figures and straighten out errors, he did not have sufficient industry to learn—that is, if it was only industry that he needed.

The day he had a half-million-dollar loan to Harris Marson hopping and skipping over five columns of the day-book, I decided that he was a mental defective and could not help making mistakes. I made out my report, the bookkeepers balanced their accounts. Then lo, and behold! the next time we had occasion to consult the day-book that half-million loan had been transferred to another column. Of course our figures had to be changed. When this happened four times the bookkeepers raised a howl.

“For God's sake, Dennis! What is that half-million? Where does it belong?”

Somebody in our department put on their thinking-cap and recalled that they had heard Hoolagan talking at the window with a Harris Marson messenger about a street call. Even though that incident had escaped Hoolagan, the rate of interest and a half-dozen other features of the loan should have told a man familiar with the T. Z. the character of that loan.

After that he stopped “correcting” my reports, and took to hiding the day-book. When the head of the bookkeeping department put a stop to that performance Hoolagan proceeded to hide himself. Just let him see me coming toward his desk with a report and Hoolagan was up and away. If he possibly could manage it, he remained



away until a messenger sent from the front would chase him down and make him sign my report. In a business less vital to our country and humanity Hoolagan would have been a joke. The T. Z. was an important factor in world finance.

The way all other men in that bank worked! I can never forget it. And the little they got out of it! The average American business man, for all his work and worry, gets a home in which to sleep, spend his Sundays and an occasional holiday. In spite of this—perhaps because of it—he is the most idealistic of God's creatures.

Behind all his work, be it mad hustle or deadly grind, there is a woman—his woman, the one woman in all the world to him. It is of her he thinks, it is for her he slaves. His adored woman, that girl of his dreams must have, shall have everything that he can win for her at any cost to himself. I know, because at the T. Z. I studied the American business man in his natural habitat—I talked with him, rubbed elbows with him while he was hustling and when he was grinding his hardest.

How often did I see a man, when called to the telephone, pick up the receiver with indifference. Then on hearing the voice at the other end of the wire his face would brighten until it beamed, and his voice would change from the resentful tone of having his work interrupted to a loving purr. It was watching the men at work in the T. Z. that I discovered the reason why our business men prefer musical comedy to high-brow drama—it comes nearer visualizing their dreams.

God bless them!—American business men. That I worked among them only six weeks was entirely my own fault, a fault for which I have often reproached myself. Had it not been for Turpin and Hoolagan—or rather had those two unworthies crossed my path later on during my four years' experience, after I had acquired a greater amount

of self-control—I might not have gone to Mr. Morton before the end of my third week and assured him that I did not like bank work, and never would like it.

Yet had I remained at the T. Z. until our soldiers returned from abroad I would not have worked in the tenements of New York City. Without what I saw and learned there my four years' experience would hardly have been worth writing. It was working in the tenements, living in the tenements on my wages that showed me what the working man and woman are up against—how they face their problems, and how they feel about present-day conditions. It was there, too, that I realized the menace of idle women to American ideals and institutions.

## CHAPTER XI

### I AM SICK IN THE UNDERBRUSH

ABOUT a week before leaving the T. Z. I had a set-to with my landlady. Stopping at the door of her room to pay my rent, I handed her two dollars and seventy-five cents—the additional quarter for gas used in cooking. Imagine my astonishment when the woman began to goggle her eyes at me, to wiggle her tongue back and forth, making a hissing sound, all the while trying to elongate and contract her fat stub of a neck. When I demanded to know if she had lost her mind, she became apologetic and assured me that she was only trying to get my vibrations. Thereupon, forgetting the biblical threat of hell-fire, I told her she was a fool—not the scientific fool that she claimed to be, but the plain garden variety.

Finding Molly on the top floor, I told her I did not wish Mrs. Brown to go into my room so long as I paid rent for it. The next day I went direct from work to the Jane Leonard House—another home for working girls. There I paid a deposit on a room with two meals a day at sixty-five cents a week, to take possession at the end of my time with Mrs. Brown. When I notified this woman that I was leaving her house she denounced me bitterly.

“You’re deserting me because I didn’t succeed in stopping the war,” she accused. Then she added, wagging her head at me: “I would’ve done it if President Wilson had a-done what I told him to. That’s who’s a fool—President Wilson. If he’d a stopped the war my fortune would’ve been made.”

President Wilson! I wonder how many persons call him a fool because he refused to make them fortunes?

But that was not the last of this owner of my first rooming-house. The day that I moved out she waylaid me on the stairs.

“Ain’t you ashamed?” she demanded. “Ain’t you ashamed to treat a fellow woman like you’ve treated me?”

“It is because you are a woman that I am leaving your house,” I told her. “You are knowingly and intentionally a faker. It is the duty of every decent woman to make you feel that you dishonor your sex. A man won’t do it—not an American—he has too much respect for your sex.”

“It’s a shame!” she cried, shedding copious tears. “Men are always kinder to a woman than other women.”

“It’s because a woman better understands a woman. Knowing the strength as well as the weakness of her own sex, she recognizes their petty deceits and dishonesties,” I replied soothingly, while I resisted an inclination to give her a good deep jab with my hatpin, and thereby give her a cause for real tears. “Don’t forget, ‘it takes a thief to catch a thief.’ Good-by, Mrs. Brown.” And I ran down the stairs and out at the front door. So far as I am concerned that was the last of Mrs. Brown, the inventor of the theory of “vibrations.”

When engaging a room at the Jane Leonard the clerk told me that guests were not allowed to keep their trunks in their rooms, and I thereupon congratulated myself on my trunks being in storage. On moving in, for in that “home” for working women guests engage rooms sight unseen, I wondered that the management had taken the trouble to formulate a rule against trunks. There was literally no place for even the smallest trunk unless it was swung from the ceiling—the bed being too low for even the thinnest of steamers.

Besides a narrow cot the top of which was scarcely one foot above the floor, there was a small rocking-chair, a

small table with one minute drawer, a narrow chiffonier with five shallow drawers, topped by a mirror narrow both ways. There was also a sash-curtain, a window-shade, a white cotton cover on the table and another on the chiffonier, a clothes-closet, and a face-towel so tiny I felt sure it would never grow up. Besides a brown door with a transom and a narrow window opening on a court only slightly wider than the door, my room consisted of four shiny yellow walls, a shiny white ceiling, and a shiny brown floor. After my first peer around my new quarters—because of the narrowness of the court and the height of the two buildings my window only admitted twilight—I took myself to task for being overcritical. Though I was paying two dollars and a quarter a week more than room and food had cost at Mrs. Brown's, I would not have to do either cooking or dish-washing. Doubtless the meals would be better and more abundant than those I had prepared for myself.

Then there were the piazzas, one on each floor, and the roof-garden, all overlooking the river, I continued, enumerating all the advantages of my new abiding-place. It would be so lovely after a hard day down-town to sit and watch the river until bedtime. Of course I must get another job on Monday; no use of loafing when our country needed every woman as well as every man. By that time my friend, a librarian who had lived in the Jane Leonard for several years, would return from her vacation, and I would have a companionable person to speak to—for weeks before leaving the rooming-house Molly was my only speaking acquaintance.

Dinner that night did not come up to my expectations—my pet abominations, baked beans and a brown bread even worse than the concoction set before you three times a week in Boston. For in spite of my three years in a Massachusetts college, I never learned to enjoy its national dish, or two dishes. Before going to the Jane Leonard

when this combination was put before me I had always looked the other way and waited for the next course. Here there was no next course. Baked beans and brown bread was dinner.

A woman who sat under my elbow—the table was so tiny that the four of us literally sat under each other's elbows—this neighbor of mine who had an unpronounceable German name and looked like an American of African descent, warned me darkly that I would be glad to get such nourishing food before "this country" got out of the war. Nourishing! The very adjective that had been drummed into my ears while at college! Even three years' drumming did not make me form the habit. Its worse result was a play.

I do not now recall just what it was about that composition that so aroused the ire of Professor Baker. It may have been that it proved my point—that New Englanders partake of their Wednesday and Saturday dinners and their Sunday breakfasts as a sort of memorial feast in honor of the hardships enjoyed by their ancestors when they first landed on their rock-bound coast. Mr. Baker would not agree that his ancestors enjoyed hardships. All one has to do is to read history. Early New Englanders enjoyed hardships just as the Irish do being persecuted—and almost as much. The result was pretty much the same—both peoples multiplied on the face of the earth and left their descendants a subject for conversation, a veritable snowball of a subject, which, by the simple method of rolling it over the tongue a hard fact becomes slushy fiction.

The next morning, Sunday, we had eggs for breakfast. Unfortunately I was the first at table, so did not have the advantage of advice from my table-mates. I ordered it medium-boiled. When peeled, it closely resembled a golf ball that had been lying in the wet grass for a couple of

months. That proved to be an intensely hot day, but sitting on the roof-garden or the piazzas was impossible because of a virulent stench.

"It's from the dumping-plant, where the city garbage is loaded on scows to take out to sea," a woman who saw me hurry down from the roof-garden explained. "The wind always blows from that direction hot days."

Being too dark to read or write in my room, I spent the morning straightening out my few belongings. On hanging the suit in which I had set out on my adventure and my coat in the closet, it seemed so full that I decided to fold my nightie and place it under my pillow.

A few minutes later a gaily frescoed individual, who informed me that she was the assistant housekeeper, entered to exchange my Peter Pan towel for a fresh one. Evidently she realized that my little pancake of a pillow had risen too high and too suddenly, for she jerked it up.

"There!" she exclaimed, pointing a stubby red finger at my nightie. "Night-clothes are to be hung in the closet. Don't you see the rules?"—pointing at a long, printed page tacked against the inside of my door. "Can't you read? You can't keep nothin' under your piller nor under your bed neither."

Here, going down on her knees, she peered carefully under the bed; then, still kneeling, she passed her eyes over every square inch of the four shiny yellow walls. When they encountered a paper bag hanging on a nail to one side of the narrow chiffonier, she scuffled angrily to her feet.

"I'm gonna report you," she cried, glaring at me. "It's positive against our rules—guests drivin' nails in the walls. This ain't no tenement. Seems like you can't teach some folks nothin'."

"Suppose you look at that nail," I advised her, as I removed the paper bag. "You can see for yourself that it has been here since before the walls were painted. It is

covered with the same coat of yellow paint. If you draw it out ever so carefully it would mar the wall."

"Well, you mustn't hang nothin' on it," she told me.

"What am I to do with my winter hat?" I asked, as I slipped a quarter into the pocket of her apron. "It is too large to get in the closet, and too good to throw away. Besides, that manila bag is so near the color of the wall it is scarcely noticeable."

She put her hand into her pocket and felt the size of the coin.

"Well, if you didn't drive the nail I won't say nothin' about the other things," she agreed. Then she added cautiously: "But you'll have to be on the lookout when Miss Digges comes round. She don't allow nothin' hung on the walls."

"Who is Miss Digges?"

"She's the head one, the manager. And you never know when she's comin'." She snatched the door open, and popping her head out looked up and down the hall. "I caught her once, just like that. She was followin' me around. Be careful about that hat now."

With that parting injunction she took her departure. Her hand was in the pocket of her apron and her gaudily painted face wreathed with smiles. Money talks!

That midday dinner was a fairly good meal. After a good soup there was chicken fricassee, a vegetable, a salad, and ice-cream. The waitresses all wore clean aprons and the table linen was fresh. During the first part of the meal I realized an indefinite feeling of discomfort that I had attributed to "nerves" had become a headache. As dinner went on instead of the pain becoming less it increased.

The little waitress placed my ice-cream before me and I glanced up and smiled at her. That movement of the muscles in my face explained my headache. My skin felt so tightly stretched that it seemed as though I should have



heard it crinkle. Leaving the ice-cream untouched I excused myself and hurried up to my room.

If I could only take my erysipelas medicine in time it would lessen the horror, perhaps prevent it entirely. Fumbling in the semidarkness of the hall I got my key in the lock of my room door, then found that I could neither turn it nor get it out. I must have struggled with that key for twenty minutes. Then going to the elevator I asked the operator if he could get it out.

"Sure, lady, I can get it out," he told me. "But I don't know what song and dance to give 'em in the office that'll make 'em let me leave the elevator. I'll go try and see."

After waiting fifteen minutes for the man to return I pushed the button. The elevator started up at once. In sight of me the operator shook his head.

"I've been waiting for you to ring. I can't move unless I get a ring. That's a rule." He opened the elevator-door. "Maybe if you goes down you can get that woman to let me off. I told her you was sick and that it wouldn't take me ten minutes, but it didn't do no good."

I stepped into the elevator and went down to the office. The clerk that afternoon was a small blonde woman, with a face as hard as a flint rock. After explaining conditions I asked her to allow the operator to leave the elevator long enough to get the key from my door—the man standing at my elbow remarking that it would not take more than five or six minutes.

"No," snapped flint-face. "We've had all we're going to take—guests putting their keys in upside down. We're going to stop it. You'll have to wait until Jack gets off. Then if he wants to help you it's no affair of ours what he does in his free time."

"When do you get off?" I asked the operator.

"Six o'clock."

It was then seventeen minutes of three. Three hours and

seventeen minutes to wait! The tight sensation in my face had passed into a sharp stinging burning that every minute was growing more and more intense. Three hours and seventeen minutes! The doctors had cautioned me against allowing erysipelas to get to my eyes.

I begged that woman as though begging for my life—for I believed that I begged for my sight. It had absolutely no effect on her. When I asked for the manager she laughed at me.

"Miss Diggs is resting," she told me, and she chuckled with delight. "You disturb her Sunday-afternoon nap and she would have your key taken out the lock, and to-morrow morning she'll have you moved out the house. If guests don't like our rules they can leave. We've got dozens on our waiting-list ready to take your place."

Despairing of getting the woman to change her mind, I stepped into the hot little reception-room and took my seat. It was stifling. I could see the sun beaming through the windows of the library and the dance-hall on the other side of the exchange, so I knew they were still hotter. My face was like a red-hot blaze, and no tooth ever ached as painfully as my whole head.

Putting my pride in my pocket I crept out and asked the woman to let me have five cents to telephone to a drug-store. I reminded her that my pocketbook was locked in my room, then that I was a friend of Miss Stafford, who had lived at the Jane Leonard for nearly five years.

"Why don't you borrow of Miss Stafford?"

"You know yourself she is not here," I wailed. "You told me so yesterday when I came in. Said she wouldn't be back from her vacation until to-morrow. I gave you a note to be delivered as soon as she arrived."

"Why don't you borrow of the elevator-man?" she asked, then added with a devil's grin: "you've got thick enough with him considering you've been here less than twenty-four hours."

"I shall ask him," I told her. "If he's got it I'm sure he'll lend it to me."

And I would have done it had I not recalled that the prescription was in my pocketbook, locked up in my room. I knew nothing of the drug-stores of that neighborhood. If the clerk at the desk would not trust me enough to lend me five cents, it was not at all probable that a druggist would let me have a medicine for which I could not pay. For the sake of getting farther away from that clerk when the elevator returned I took it and went back to my floor.

In the Jane Leonard one of the many "features" advertised is the sitting-rooms, one on each floor. It was to one of these I now crept. My head! My God! the pain in my head. The living flame that was my face! If, when I die, I go to hell I do not believe I shall—that I can suffer greater agony than I did during the three hours spent in that hot little room opening on a court and shut off from the outside air. Even now, looking back at this distance, that afternoon—like one mad, hideously flaming blur—is painful.

When, after eons of time, the elevator-man appeared in the door of that sitting-room, he had to repeat his statement that he had opened my door before I could understand. I think that I must have been semidelirious. I remember that as he followed me to my door he said that it had not taken him five minutes. Also—this more vividly—that he refused to take the tip that, though suffering pain almost unendurable, I had memory enough to offer.

Though the first half of that night was a hideous nightmare it was not so bad as the afternoon. I could not lie down, but I rested on the bed with my head on a pillow against the wall. Besides I had water, not very cool, but a refreshing moisture to the fever of my face. Most of all was the certainty that relief was on the way—once the medicine had time to act.

This must have happened toward midnight. I was suffi-

ciently conscious to recognize the step of a man passing along the hall, and to know that he was the night-watchman. Calling through a crack of my door I asked him to turn off the light in the hall immediately in front of my transom. He was so concerned about my not being asleep that screwing up my courage I asked if he thought he could get me a small piece of ice.

"Sure, lady," he told me. "I'll get it from the ice-box in the basement, and I'll bring it straight up—not wait to come on my rounds."

That flint-faced woman in the office had shaken my faith in humanity to such an extent that I did not believe this watchman. I thought he was jollying me. So sure of it that I went back to dabbling my handkerchief in the little pan of water that I had fetched from the bathroom, and tried to make myself as comfortable as might be sitting on the bed with my head propped against the wall.

In a surprisingly short time the night-watchman was back again. He had brought me a pitcherful of ice, not a small pitcher either. He explained that he had put the large piece at the bottom so that I might easily get the smaller ones. When I offered him a tip he stepped beyond the reach of my hand, and told me:

"My wife's niece lived in a place like this before she married. One time she took sick and 'most starved to death before she could get us word—nobody come near her for more'n two days. If you want anything just you call when you hear me passing."

For the first time I realized fully the blessing of ice. The little towel being too rough I tore up the softer of my two nighties to get a cloth large enough to cover my face and neck. After several applications of this cloth saturated in ice-cold water, I fell asleep, comforted by the belief that the medicine and ice had come in time to prevent the erysipelas from reaching my eyes.

When I waked I could not open my eyes. I distinctly recall that I had no thoughts, no fears—just a stunned feeling. Next I decided that I must not cry—that would not help matters, only lessen the chance of saving my sight, that is, if it could be saved. Then I determined that if I did have to be blind I did not have to be a coward. Groping about I located my little pan and the pitcher. Two pieces of ice still floated in the deliciously cold water, and I proceeded to apply the cloth saturated with the water.

As the time wore on I heard alarm-clocks in the rooms about me go off, their owners get up, move about while dressing, then go out, always banging their doors. One by one I listened as their footfalls became less and less distinct and merged into silence. The chambermaids came on. I heard them talking and the clash and thumping of the dustpans and brooms. Finally one came to my room.

Without knocking she opened the door, and before I could prevent her turned on the light. I shrieked with pain. Then as automatically heaved a sigh of relief—if light hurt my eyes I could not be totally blind. On learning that I was sick and would make my own bed, the maid turned and was leaving the room. I asked her to turn off the light, and then after an effort inquired if she could get me some cracked ice. She took the pitcher and promised to bring back the ice as soon as she got a "chance."

As time passed and the girl did not return I realized my folly in allowing her to take the pitcher—even tepid water was more soothing to my inflamed face and eyes than the dry cloth. At last, giving up all expectation of getting ice until the return of Miss Stafford, I took my little tin pan and groped my way to the bathroom.

Back in my room I found that I had barely a half-teacup of water—doubtless there was a rule against spilling water along the halls. Fortunately, I reasoned, the heat would soon dry it up. The house was profoundly still.

If there was anybody in it they didn't come to my hall. Several times I made the trip back and forth to the bathroom with my tin pan, each time realizing that the inflammation must be less because I could see a little better.

It was a long day but I did not get hungry. When the women began to return from work I began nervously to wait for my friend. Being employed in the library of a down-town mortgage company, I knew their closing hour was not later than five-thirty. Time passed, but none of the footsteps passing so frequently along the hall stopped at my door.

One woman's voice called along the hall asking the time. Another answered that it was a few minutes before eight. Eight o'clock! Miss Stafford had not returned from her vacation and I was dependent on the night-watchman. He had told me that he made his first round at eleven o'clock, so I set about preparing for the three hours' wait—to make my little pan of water last until he came. Now the inflammation had subsided sufficiently to make me keenly conscious of the difference between the duskiness of the halls during daylight and the glare under electric lights.

One of the footfalls along the hall did stop at my door. There was a tap and my friend entered.

"Why!" she exclaimed. "What makes you such a night-owl? I'm going to turn on the light."

Fortunately I spoke before she found the electric button. She was shocked on learning what was the matter, and how it had all happened, and even more shocked when I told her that I had moved in the previous Saturday afternoon and left a note for her with the clerk. She had returned from her vacation Saturday forenoon, had been in the Jane Leonard all Saturday afternoon, all Sunday except for the time spent lunching with a friend a few blocks away. She had returned from her office a few minutes before six that

afternoon, got her mail and room-key at the office on her way to her room. Returned, handed in her key at the office, had her dinner, and then gone out for a walk. It was after this walk, when she stopped at the office for the key of her room, that my note was given her by the night-clerk.

The only information vouchsafed to Miss Stafford and me by the woman to whom I had given the note was:

"It was misplaced. I put it in 507 as soon as it turned up." And the tone in which that statement was made was not in the slightest apologetic. Indeed it was impatient to the point of rudeness.

"There's nothing we can do," Miss Stafford told me. "Mrs. Scrimser, that's the room-clerk's name, is a special friend of Miss Diggs. Miss Diggs? She belongs to an old New York family, they say. She's always very nice to me. She always speaks to me."

"Why!" I exclaimed. "Doesn't she speak to every guest who has been here long enough for her to know them?"

Miss Stafford shook her head.

"That's the reason we consider it worth mentioning when she does. You'll have to wait and see for yourself. It's a condition that can't exactly be explained."

A very wise reply I found that to be before I left the Jane Leonard—a condition that cannot exactly be explained. At least it could not be explained with credit to the persons controlling the house, nor to the woman whom they employed to manage it.

Because of that attack of erysipelas I was confined to my room for nearly a week. When I felt strong enough to go out, it was only in the evening to the roof-garden, or for a walk along the river's edge. Even then I was compelled to wear a broad-brimmed hat and colored glasses to shield my eyes. When at last my eyes became strong enough for me to lay aside the glasses, it was a couple of

weeks before I dared to read or do anything besides coarse knitting—sweaters for our soldiers.

Lack of money forced me back to work. The last of the fifty dollars for which I had worked so hard, and skimped so carefully, had to be drawn from the savings-bank to pay my board. Fortunately the Y. W. would get me a job without first exacting a fee.

On my explaining that I didn't feel quite honest—taking a position and receiving the training, and then leaving within a couple of weeks—the woman in charge of the employment bureau advised me to take temporary positions. There was always quite a demand for such workers, she explained. Now that there was so much government work to be done, she found it hard to get any one to so much as consider a temporary job.

“Have you anything temporary in the way of government work?” I asked. “I'd like to feel that I was helping the government if there is anything you think I could do.”

“I wish all the girls sent out from here were as well equipped,” she told me while looking over her file. “I'll give you a card to ex-State Senator Gallagher. He is organizing and setting in motion the working end of the District Board for the City of New York, down in the old Post-Office Building. There are plenty of other openings, but I'm quite sure he'll take you.”



## CHAPTER XII

### JACKALS FIGHT TO KEEP FROM FIGHTING

THE evening after my first day spent as a clerk of the District Board for the City of New York I reached the Jane Leonard in time to be among the first who entered the dining-room for dinner. The meal was good enough, soup, roast lamb and a vegetable, and it being Monday the aprons and shirt-waists of the waitresses were still clean, but—oh, the flies! These pests swarmed over everything except Miss Diggs' table. That was always kept carefully covered with mosquito-netting.

Getting through dinner as soon as I decently could, I hurried up to one of the piazzas and sat watching the boats passing back and forth on the river—every conceivable sort of craft from a tiny dory manned by two half-nude small boys to huge Sound steamers with noisily splashing side-wheels. Among this noisy throng now and then there would pass such strangely colored boats, boats that made me think them the product of some cubist or futurist when in the clutches of a nightmare—camouflage, weird twistings and curves in blues, greens, purples, black, gray, white. It was soon after the disappearance of one such boat that Miss Stafford came out and took the chair next to mine.

"How do you like your new position?" she asked, as turning her chair sideways to the piazza railing she put her feet on the rung of my chair.

"W-e-l-l," I hesitated. "I don't know whether to be amused by it or to hate it—reading the affidavits of draft-evaders. There are so many of them I feel like kicking, yet, at the same time I feel like crying—to find that there

are so many persons living in our country, fattening on it, enjoying its benefits and not caring enough for it to fight for its ideals."

"You mustn't expect everybody to be as keen about doing their bit as you are. Your fingers are never still. You must roll bandages or knit sweaters in your sleep," she laughed. "What are the other employees like?"

"We're a grab-bag lot. It is just as though the Secretary of War, wishing to set going the machinery of the draft, had thrust his hand into a bag filled with a miscellaneous collection of workers, and would-be workers, and grabbed a handful. The head of the subdepartment in which I work was a saleswoman in a smallish Brooklyn shop, at eight dollars a week. Now she is getting twenty-five, and seems to look upon it as a miracle."

"I can sympathize with her," the librarian told me. "In the New York public library I only received forty dollars a month. Now I get eighty and the promise of a bonus at Christmas. After you've skimped and struggled so long to have your salary doubled in one jump does make you feel inclined to pinch yourself. But when the war is over—you don't think salaries will go down again, do you?"

"I don't know. That's what I'm trying to find out—whether wages should go still higher, remain on the present level, or fall back to the pre-war figure." Then I outlined what I had done, and what I planned to do.

"Until after the war—go from one position to another? I never heard of such a thing!" she exclaimed. "You will never make anything, taking what employers offer you."

"I'll learn conditions and, incidentally, employers."

"But you might do so much better. With your pull even though you can't go abroad you could land something big. There's the publicity department——"

"Allah forbid!" And even a Moslem himself could not have been more fervent.

"But why not? You're a writer, and——"

"It is because I am a writer," I interrupted. "Because I am a writer and intend some day to be an author."

"You make a distinction! Whom do you think of as authors?"

"Thomas Hardy, John Galsworthy, George Eliot, Margaret Deland, Booth Tarkington, and others," I answered, then added: "Come, let us talk about people, not books."

"All right," she agreed pleasantly, though she still kept her feet on my chair. "You say the head of your sub-department gets twenty-five a week—what does the head of the department receive? And what manner of individual is he or she?"

"Fifty a week. A man, of course, about forty, hale and hearty, with a wife and no children. I think he must be what is called a political hanger-on. I heard him tell Mr. Jobaski that he hadn't been without a political job for more than twenty years, just stepped from one to another."

"And Mr. Jobaski?"

"Quite a young man, not more than twenty-six. He's the head of another department and receives fifty a week. His name tells his nationality."

"Unmarried?"

I nodded my head. "But he has a mother," I added, wishing to give as good an account as possible of my fellow workers.

"Dependent?" The librarian had quick-moving, clear blue eyes. There was still enough daylight for me to see that she suspected my object.

"W-e-l-l," glancing at her through the corners of my eyes and catching her watching me, I laughed, "to tell the truth Mr. Jobaski is a draft-evader, or trying to be. Miss Sneezet, my immediate boss, told me that he had been drafted, but was 'tryin' to keep from goin'.' This afternoon, as a great honor, he offered to let me use his pen.

He assured me it was solid gold, and given him by his mother at his last birthday. It certainly is solid something, almost as large as my thumb, with a larger emerald set in the end—really a handsome stone. For a pen! It felt more like a crowbar. Any more questions, Miss Persecuting Attorney?"

"Since you don't really enjoy the work, it must be the persons with whom you are thrown. I may as well learn your taste," Miss Stafford informed me, and it was entirely evident that she did not approve of the plan I had mapped out for myself. "And the individuals in your department—men, women, or whatever they may be?"

"Women and girls. The one on my right had been peddling matches when she was 'taken on'—she couldn't get anything else, so she told me. The one at my left was cashier in a butcher-shop, seven a week. Another had been a saleswoman in a jewelry store, seven a week. Next her a girl who, as a learner on a power-machine, had not arrived at the dignity of a salary. While the one taken on after me was in her second year at high school when eatables began to sky-rocket so fast last winter. She had to go to work, cash-girl in a department store at five a week, to help her father support her younger brothers and sisters."

The librarian shook her head and continued to regard me with speculative eyes. I could see that she was thinking of me, what she regarded as my peculiar taste, not of the persons about whom I had been talking.

"Don't you think it's pathetic?" I began again after a short silence. "These women and girls are forced to think of such a catastrophe as the war as a godsend. From five dollars a week to fifteen, think what a relief it must be. I don't believe that the girl who was selling matches made even—" Glancing up stream I caught my breath. "Hush," I whispered, peering at a dark bulk on the river gliding toward us.

"Hush!" the woman at my elbow repeated, and others taking up the word it ran the length of the piazza.

"Yes! Yes! It is they," the woman at my elbow exclaimed, half under her breath. "I saw them against a light on the water. They are in uniform—our boys!"

It came on, that huge black ship; it made no sound, there was no ray of light. Against the reflections of the shore lights dancing on the water we made out, peering through the gloom, the trim young figures packing every deck and leaning from the port-holes. The other crafts on the river, as though recognizing the destination of the great ship and the preciousness of her freight, all made way for her—three of them crowding close against the shore in front of the Jane Leonard.

"May we not call God's blessing to them?" a woman's voice farther along the piazza questioned, half sobbing.

"Give the German spies in this house a chance to have their ship sunk as it leaves the harbor? Not much." It was the little woman at my elbow.

As they drew nearer—our boys—each woman found her pocket-handkerchief. There was no waving, no word; now and then a half-smothered sob. A mute tribute to the soldiers on the dark ship to which they responded as mutely—as the ship swept past, against the dancing lights on the water, we saw that they all bared their heads.

Bending far out over the banisters of the piazza we watched it gliding away from us—a silent ship upon a silent river, no sound, no ray of light. Now and again as it passed a building on the island we would get a glimpse of the trim silhouette of a young figure. Under the bridge it slipped and beyond, at every heart-beat growing smaller and more dim. Then it melted into darkness—a black-gray speck upon a black-gray river.

The women on the piazza drew a deep breath that sounded almost like a heavy sigh from one breast as they

sank back in their chairs. The men in the three crafts that had put in against our shore began to talk—not loudly, but to call back and forth, as though giving and taking orders. A bell clanged, a whistle sounded, and the three boats again started on their way—busily noisy boats on a busy, noisy river.

“I’m going down-stairs,” the woman at my elbow announced. “If any of those damned spies tries to use the telephone, I’ll know how to stop her.” She was no bigger than a second.

“I’ll go with you,” a woman called from the far end of the piazza.

Conversation was not resumed. One by one the women went in until finally the piazza was left to the librarian and me. Unmindful of my surroundings I sat staring straight ahead—for all I knew one of my brothers, or all of them, might be on that silent ship. Would they sail away into the unknown without being allowed to say good-by to any one, even their mothers? Had the country that my ancestors helped to found come to such a pass?—its sons going to fight in its defense must steal away in the darkness. Immigrants? Loathsome ingrates!

“I’m thinking of your grab-bag lot,” Miss Stafford remarked, and I, having forgotten her presence, turned grouchily toward her.

“Politics, like want, makes strange bedfellows,” I replied indifferently. Somehow the heart seemed to have been dragged out of my body by the passing of that ship. I longed to go away, get off by myself, yet dreaded the hot discomfort of my little room. Why could not this woman go to her comfortable room and leave me the piazza?

“Under a Democratic administration it is to be expected that Democrats will get all the jobs,” the librarian reminded me. “To the victors belong the spoils, you know.”

“All I know about it,” I replied crossly, “is that Judge

Roger Pryor once told me that he was the first to use that quotation as a political slogan. I don't know the politics of any of my fellow workers."

When this subject recurred to me the following day I promptly began a quiet investigation. Much to my surprise I learned that with the exception of Mr. Gallagher, every person with whom I had come in contact who received above fifteen dollars a week, the lowest salary paid, was a Republican, and had voted against President Wilson. And they made no bones about either fact. Mr. Jobaski boasted of having held, for several years, another federal job. And that he still held it, having put in a substitute at a lower salary. Speaking of it, he assured me that it was the easiest and safest way for a person to make money.

The head of the department in which I worked, the fifty-dollar-a-week man, also had a code of morals somewhat different from any I had ever heard put into words.

"What's your hurry?" he would ask, on seeing you returning to your work after lunch, or at any time. "No need for you to rush around and kill yourself. When you cheat the government you are only cheating yourself—taking what really belongs to you, your own property."

He certainly lived up to his own preaching. In the whole six weeks that I was on that job I never saw him do so much as an hour's work. When he was not lolling back, his chair on its two hind legs, smoking an expensive cigar, he was strolling along the corridors smoking or talking with anybody he could buttonhole. He was a great man for "ordering" supplies for the department—pencils, paper, printed blanks of every known variety, in short anything that he could think of, or that was suggested to him. Because my eyes were giving me trouble I borrowed an eyeshade and wore it while at work. This man caught a glimpse of me and at once sent in a written order for eye-shades for every worker in the department, including himself. When

the shades came and were distributed everybody, excepting myself and the man, tossed them aside with scorn. Up to the very day of his discharge this man made a point of wearing his eye-shade when strolling along the corridors smoking. To-day among my "exhibits" I treasure a green celluloid eye-shade, paid for by the United States.

In this federal job my work at first was winnowing out and getting together the papers of drafted men whose claim for exemption had to be passed on by the District Board. And such claims as many of them did set forth!—reasons why they should not be called on to fight for their country. They called themselves *men*!

It was from these papers that I learned a new use for a wife—to help her husband evade draft duty. The variety of these dependent ones was almost as great as their number. One was dependent because her husband paid fifteen thousand a year for an apartment in which to keep her. The husband of this expensive dependent was a composer of popular music, who described himself as a "creative artist," and he gave his yearly income at such a very low figure that the greatest of the many surprises in his paper was that he was able to pay his rent. That man's papers were so absurd, for, while pleading his inability to support his wife if he was forced to go to the front, he boasted of the huge sums he had received in royalties, so that I always had a suspicion that they were prepared by his publicity agent with his tongue in his cheek.

Another proud possessor of a dependent wife was the son of a millionaire bread-maker. His application proved him to be in such dire poverty that we all decided he had made a mistake—instead of being the son of a bread-maker, he must have been the son of a bread-line.

Unfortunately for the evaders their wives were not always so complacent. One man made out a very good case—his wife was delicate, their baby less than two years old, and



his salary small. Alas for his hopes! His father-in-law also sent an affidavit with the necessary number of witnesses. He proved that this dearly beloved dependent wife had been deserted by her now affectionate husband six months after marriage—the father-in-law had supported both mother and child. This old man stated plainly that he would be very grateful to get his son-in-law sent out of the country, and kept out—he did not specify on which battle-field.

When Alice left me I felt sure that never again would I meet a person with such an exalted opinion of a college education. That was an error. I was yet to meet two more. The first of these two appealed to me the day that our department was moved up-stairs—the top floor of the old Post-Office Building. In appearance he was an unusually fine-looking man of about twenty-five—a blond, and slightly under six feet in height. He was the picture of health, well fed and exceptionally well groomed.

Stopping in the door he glanced around and chanced to catch my eyes. Smiling he walked across and greeted me with great cordiality. He wished very much to know just how his case stood, he explained, and was sure that I could assist him materially. I had not read his papers, so I asked him for an outline of his case, as well as his name and address. On learning these particulars my face must have expressed a lack of enthusiasm in his cause, for he hastened to add:

“It’s like this—if I’d thought I was going to be drafted, I would have enlisted. Now all I ask ’em is to let me enlist.”

“Now that you are drafted why do you wish to enlist?” I asked, for this was a new type of an evader to me.

He drew himself up to his full height and looked down on me with indignation.

“I’m a college man,” he informed me haughtily. “It

is impossible for me to associate with the type of man sent to —th Camp."

"Why, what is the matter with them?" I questioned, still at a loss to know at what he actually was driving. "What could they do to you?"

"Do to me?" He was so disgusted that he appeared to consider turning his back on me. Evidently he had a second and what he considered a wiser thought. "I'll tell you just how it is—what happened when I went out there the other day," he began in the confidential tone assumed by some men when they think they are about to help themselves to a kiss. "The first man I met was a barber—the fellow who has been shaving me every morning for—oh, I don't know how long." Looking at him I waited—I was not waiting for the kiss. "Now, you couldn't expect me to associate with fellows like those—could you?" I looked away without replying—there are so many different kinds of fool in this world. After a moment he added pettishly: "If you were a college woman you'd understand."

He not only made me feel ill, but he made me feel evil. I felt just as one does when in the grip of a bilious attack—what is it all about?—why not kill me at once without putting me through such nauseating torments?

"I am a college woman," I told him, feeling weak from nausea. The next instant resentment flared up, and taking the bit in my teeth I lied without shame. "I'm not only a college graduate, but I have four honorary degrees."

"Four degrees!" he cried, staring at me goggle-eyed. "Why, why! What you work here for?—'mong these people?"

"For one reason, because I'm not a jinnyass," I snapped back at him. "For another, I'd sweep the streets, be glad to sweep them, for the sake of helping my country win this war." Then I stood and glared at him, and I think I clinched my fists. "God help a college that turns out such

male creatures as you." Turning my back on him I stalked over to a window and stood staring at the front of the City Hall.

I was not grieving for the lie told when claiming four degrees. But I did regret, rebelliously regret, that it was not within my power to form all draft-evaders in one company, force them to the front, and leave them for the Germans to finish. I questioned, and I still question, the right of any person, man or woman, to live in a country for which he or she is unwilling to fight. I felt and I still feel that if they had any sense of honor in their puny souls, they would get out and found a country of their own—a country of draft-evaders!

As contemptible as these persons seemed to me there was another class for which I had an even greater abomination—a class, as I now see conditions, that not only threatens the life of our country but of what we call Christian civilization. That class against which the most beloved of our Presidents never ceased to thunder—the intentionally childless married woman.

There was never a day that we, handling the papers of draft-evaders, did not see and recognize her as she stalked, marched, waddled, or blew in on us—the contemptuous, eyebrow-lifting type, the I-know-my-rights-and-I'll-have-'em type, the life-is-so-hard type, and the airy-fairy-Lillian type. They all came, singly, in couples, and occasionally in trios, all on the same business—"to see about my husband's case."

Well do I remember the first of this class that fell to my lot. She blew in like a slender, perfectly equipped racing-sloop, with one tall billowy sail. In spite of her slenderness there was a suggestion of Cleopatra—her slow smile, her slumberous dark eyes, which, when you crossed the wishes of their owner, became pin-points of amber flame behind narrow slits.

By nature I am as soft as a man about good-looking women. This girl was beautiful. She said she felt sure that I would be able to help her. Odd how one could always recognize a congenial person, she added. And the smile with which she made this assertion was a poem, and the glance of her wonderful slumberous eyes might have made any man feel sure that he could write an epic. Of course had she not wished my services she would never have wasted either on—a woman.

Her husband, poor dear boy, wished to go to the front. She had coaxed him not to enlist, even gone so far as to say that if he did not enlist and should be drafted, she would raise no objection. It seemed so certain that he would not be caught, so many men were not, you know. Of course a promise given under such circumstances could not be binding. She had had her lawyer draw up the necessary papers asking her husband's exemption.

"We wives do have some rights, you know!" she exclaimed, at the end of her story.

"You have been married five years and your husband's salary is ten thousand dollars a year—surely you have saved enough to supplement the government's allowance to the wife of a soldier," I told her, for I longed to help the man in his determination to fight for his country, yet at the same time, I did not wish in any way to mar the dainty perfection of this beautiful creature.

"Saved!" Another slow smile as her body swayed gracefully. "You have never lived in a hotel, my dear. Saving is impossible. What they don't take from you on your bills they do in tips. It is terrible! Why—" She paused, glanced me over as though taking my measure, then bent toward me and lowered her voice to a confiding lower tone. "Even the clothes on my back are not paid for."

"But your children?" I demanded, for I was shocked,

and my voice showed it. "Surely you should save for your children."

Her eyes flashed out at me—two sharp rays of amber flame between slitted lids.

"Children?" she purred. "I've too much sense for that, to destroy my best asset—my figure."

Among the many wives-have-their-rights individuals who paid us personal calls was one who waddled in at the lunch-hour, when Miss Sneezet and I chanced to be the only ones in the department. She was short, plump, and wore expensive clothes. She had come to find out what she could do about her husband, she explained to Miss Sneezet. He'd been drafted, and she wanted to make sure that he would pay her the alimony awarded her by the courts.

Miss Sneezet reminded her that the government made certain provisions for dependent wives. Oh, yes, she knew about that, this woman replied, but it was such a small amount. The courts had allowed her thirty dollars a week alimony; if the government took her husband away it should not only make good that amount, but should see that she got her husband's insurance. Suppose he got killed, then her alimony would stop entirely. Yes, it was only right that the government should make it up to her and guaranty her against loss. A wife had some rights, and she wanted hers.

"Perhaps your husband had his insurance made payable to his children," Miss Sneezet suggested.

"Children!" the woman cried, her eyes round with surprise. "He ain't got no children. I never had none, and he ain't never married again."

"Suppose you give me your name," Miss Sneezet finally suggested, as a means of getting rid of her. When the name was given Miss Sneezet glanced up from her writing-pad and her eyes were round with astonishment. "Mrs. John Tooler! But—but you gave your husband's name as Henry Madden."

"Well, you see he ain't exactly my husband, not now. He used to be, but I divorced him before I married John," the woman explained, and she was not the least bit abashed.

When one considers there is no reason why she should have felt abashed. Such cases are so common that the woman not only continues to demand her pound of flesh after remarriage, but should the earnings of the first man materially increase, she goes to court and asks for a larger share. Nine cases out of ten she gets it. And why shouldn't she? Having gone through the marriage ceremony not only prevents her from being classed with her twin sister, the woman of the street, but secures for her a share of any worldly goods that may come into the possession of the man until death them do part. If death should part them?—there she stands, next in order after the undertaker and the doctor, demanding her dower rights. Wives have rights!

Having stood the strain—reading the papers of draft-evaders and listening to the stories of the daughters of a horse-leech—until I longed to get off the earth, I asked to be transferred to the filing department. There my boss was an ex-milliner.

"I had a good little business," she confided to me one day at lunch. "Five girls workin' for me, and a boy to deliver. The war wiped me out." She paused, picked at her paper napkin with her fork, then went on. "If I'd only known enough to stop when trade first begun to fall off!" She paused again, this time staring at me in a sort of breathless amazement. "I even used mother's burial money—payin' off my girls. She made me take it—we was both so sure the war would soon be over."

"You're replacing it now," I suggested, trying to make my tone consoling—in the tenements for a child to use a parent's burial fund is a mortal sin.

An expression of satisfaction, almost blissful in its depths,

spread over her face and seemed to strengthen her whole person. "I'm doing it though there isn't any need. Mother's makin' bigger money than me. She is company-companion to a rich lady—don't have to do no work of any kind, just walks out with the old lady and helps her in and out the limmossin when they goes drivin'. The trained nurse who waited on the old lady went to France."

"Does she give your mother the same wages?" I asked.

"Sure. Forty a week. You oughter see the eats she brings home nights. Last night she had a baked chicken—only the wings and a little of the breast had been cut off. The cook told mother she might as well take it—the help was tired of chicken. Somehow—" She paused thoughtfully, a troubled look clouding her eyes, then added wistfully: "Somehow I can't just fancy folks havin' good things to eat so constant that they'd get tired of baked chicken, can you?"

In the filing department my next-seat neighbor was the heir apparent of the Irish throne. Having bossed the princess royal of the same country while at Sutton House, I bore with equanimity this close association with such an exalted personage. Of course I was careful to defer to his judgment on all matters of importance—such as the proper length of a lady's skirt, when one gentleman should knock another gentleman down, just how drunk a gentleman or a lady might be permitted to get at their grandmother's wake, and politics. Yes, of course politics. All rightful heirs to the Irish throne whom I have met, and I have met thousands, have talked politics. That I take it, talking politics, is the surest sign of their royal blood.

Just at this time the state and city elections were brewing in New York. John Purroy Mitchel was standing for re-election as mayor of the Greater City. One day, wishing to keep in touch with the thoughts of my royal neighbor, I asked if he thought Mr. Mitchel would win.

"Win!" he cried, in a voice of haughty scorn. "He'll be snowed under." Then he added reprovingly: "You should know that."

"How should I know?" I inquired, meek though puzzled.

"Every Catholic has been instructed to vote against the scoundrel," he informed me.

"Ah!" I exclaimed, for I was genuinely startled.

"That order came straight from Rome," he assured me, in a lowered tone. "If your brother lived here he would have told you."

I stared at him, and he, misinterpreting my expression, smiled jubilantly as he nodded his head in emphasis.

"I wonder if either of my three brothers could have told me?" I questioned, and I looked him straight in the eyes. "My brothers are all Americans."

"I'm an American," he asserted indignantly. "I was born——"

"I don't care where you were born," I interrupted. "No one, man or woman, who takes orders from a power outside the United States is an American. A person who takes orders from Rome is no more to be trusted than one who takes orders from Berlin. I'll not sit by either."

Grabbing my file in one hand and my chair in the other, I marched to the other end of the table. Two days later this man was caught on the roof caressing one of the youngest of the girls in our department—she had been taken from school to help her parents support the family. What the men employees did to this fellow I never knew. He did not return, not even to finish that day.

For one thing I am devoutly thankful—that Polly Preston is an American. It must be the most stupid of tasks to write about a human being who is forbidden to think for him or her self. I had as soon write about a white bait.

During the later part of September, while still working for the District Board for the City of New York, I moved



my belongings from the Jane Leonard to the top floor of a rooming-house in Greenwich Village—in the same house and on the same floor with Hildegarde Hook. Having met this young woman at the Y. W. C. A. and learned from herself that she was a writer, and from the Association that she was a problem, I decided to put her on my list of those and that to be investigated.

Early in October the workers for the District Board began to be laid off. When my turn came I was not sorry. Jobs were plentiful, wages on the rise, and I was anxious to try another field.

## CHAPTER XIII

### "MORE DEADLY THAN THE MALE"

THE day after leaving the District Board for the City of New York I called at the employment department of the Y. W. The head of the department greeted me cordially. She had plenty of jobs—up-town, down-town, in all the suburbs. Reading her card catalogue of openings she stated that the Suffrage Party was offering ten dollars a week for canvassers, to work from five to nine evenings.

"Could you place me where I would not be recognized?" I inquired.

"Know many persons on the upper West Side?" she asked. I shook my head. "Ever see Miss Madeline Marks?" Again I shook my head. "She's in charge at the West 78th Street branch. She's been begging for help. I'll give you a card——"

The telephone at her elbow rang vigorously. She took off the receiver and applied it to her ear, all the while filling in a card introducing me to Miss Madeline Marks.

"Daskam & Howe? Yes, I remember. You want addressers? Piece-work? One and a quarter a thousand? No, I can't send you any one at that." The secretary's tone was final. "One fifty is the least they are taking. Most demand two. Are they getting it?" A satisfied chuckle. "I've listed about four vacancies to every one I've been able to fill. Of course if any one comes in—What's that?—one dollar seventy-five?"

"I'll take it," I whispered. "Tell them you'll be able to send one."

"I may be able to send you one or two at one seventy-five," she called over the wire. "Of course I'll do the best

I can for you. Good-by.” As she hung up the receiver she turned to me. “I was in hopes you’d be willing to help the Suffrage Party out,” she told me, and it was plainly evident that she was disappointed. “This is the last week before the election, and——”

“I’m going to take both positions,” I hastened to interrupt. “My first job was with Daskam & Howe—mail-order house. The manager of the addressers is a nice little man; he’ll let me get off afternoons in time to canvass for suffrage.”

She cut her eyes at me and smiled.

“Any of them will do that now,” she assured me. “They’ll let you do about anything you want, they are so put to it to get workers. I’m glad you’re going to work for suffrage. Do you think there’s any chance of our winning?”

“If I work for it—yes.”

She turned on me and looked me up and down.

“What do you mean?” she asked.

“There’s a sort of superstition at home—however hopeless a cause may appear, if I get busy and work for it it wins.”

“You believe it?”

“Why not?” I parried. “We all thought President Wilson’s chance for re-election was hopeless. At the eleventh hour I had myself made vice-president of a Woodrow Wilson League and got busy.”

“That was a close shave!” she breathed.

“My work saved him,” I laughed.

“For heaven’s sake!” she exclaimed, pressing two cards of introduction into my hand. “Get busy and work for suffrage.”

Within half an hour I presented myself at the employees’ entrance of Daskam & Howe. Instead of the kindly little manager a young woman with a face like an Indian toma-

hawk received me. Being among the late-comers, I was seated in the room in which the buyers of the firm had their desks. All these buyers, including corsets and women's underwear, were men. At least that was the condition the day that I began work. A day or so later a woman, the only woman employed by the firm as a buyer, returned from her vacation.

"Hello, fellers!" she called, stopping in the door on her return. "Damn busy, I see, chewing the rag. You're a hell of a lot." And after this a long string of oaths.

In the use of swear words I had imagined the men buyers unsurpassed. They couldn't touch that girl. It did not seem possible for her to open her mouth without letting out a string of oaths. She swore at her fellow buyers, at the men and women who came bringing samples from manufacturers. She swore at members of the firm, at me, and all the other addressers, but most of all she swore at the telephone.

Strange to say, the men buyers were shocked. So long as she was in the room they acted like a handful of mice in the presence of a cat. Puzzled by this I asked the girl with the tomahawk face for an explanation.

"Who, Miss Sojowski?" she replied. "She's got these men beat to a finish. That's what's the matter. She's buyer for women and girls' suits, hats, and coats—four jobs in one. She's been with the firm five years, and she's never made a mistake—all her styles sell, no left-overs. Sure she makes big money. Three times as much as any of these little simps pulls down." She glared at the men buyers, who could not have avoided hearing every word she said.

My next-seat neighbor at this place was a young man from Canada. He spent his time breathing darkly hideous threats against the Germans, what he would do once he "got across." Bit by bit his fellow workers learned that soon after England entered the war he had induced the

sixteen-year-old daughter of his employer, a prosperous farmer, to elope with him. When, in spite of his marriage he was called to the colors, he eloped alone to the United States, and had been living in New York under an assumed name.

It was a shame, he declared, that a young fellow of his ability should be forced to address envelopes. He had expected to get a position as manager of some millionaire's farm—a sort of all-pay-and-no-work job. He would have got it, too, he assured us, if the people in the States were not so prejudiced against the Irish. Soon as would-be employers learned that he was not born in Canada, they turned against him, he asserted—gave the position to a “dirty Dago” or a man of some other inferior race.

Recalling the abundance of king-descended men and women of his race, I inquired about his forebears. Sure enough, he gave me a long list of kings and saints, and assured us all that only the tyranny of England prevented him from living in a palace without having to “turn a hand.”

The day that the addressers were paid off this slacker suggested to a lame man who sat across the table from him that it would be a friendly thing for him to start a subscription—get up enough money to pay his, the slacker's, railroad fare back to Canada.

“If your wife's daddy is so rich, why don't you ask him to send you the money?” the lame man, a middle-aged Jew, asked.

“Him!” the young, healthy Irish-Canadian exclaimed contemptuously. “He don't want I should come back. Both of his boys were killed by the Germans. Now he's trying to turn my wife against me, saying I deserted her.”

“Well, didn't you?” the lame man demanded. “You told me your child was more than a year old, and you'd never seen it. You said you had never got enough ahead to send your wife money.”

"She don't need I should," the slacker replied. "Her father's richer than butter, and she's all he's got now."

The lame man struggled to his feet and lifted his crutch.

"I'm a poor man," he said, and taking his pay-envelope from his pocket he held it up, "but if I had a million dollars in this I wouldn't give you a nickel. My father brought us from Poland when I was ten years old. When this war came my brother, the youngest of the family, was the only one able to fight. My father and I promised to care for his wife and four children."

The lame man slipped his pay-envelope back into his pocket, then fitted the crutch under his arm. You might have heard a pin drop.

"Your brother'll come back," a woman addresser assured him hopefully.

The lame man straightened up and swung himself around on his crutch.

"Less than two months after he went away we got the news—he had been killed in battle." He turned and faced the slacker. "My brother was a good husband," he said; "he loved his children." Clutching his hat and his little lunch-box in one hand, he stumped out.

This pay-day brought me a real surprise. Instead of counting the envelopes I learned that they reckoned by weight. My three days' work, according to my own count, amounted to five thousand envelopes. Soon after the basket in which they had been packed was taken out, the girl with a face like a tomahawk hurried in and informed me that there were only three thousand and three hundred. Against the advice of my fellow addressers I demanded a recount—perhaps I should say a count, for they had been weighed, never counted.

After considerable bluster my work was turned over to another young girl. In the first box she found eighty-one while I found one hundred. On a second counting she

also found one hundred. The difference in the second box was even greater. After that she evidently decided it was a hopeless task—trying to cheat me. According to her final count, I had addressed five thousand five hundred and fifty-seven. I was paid for five thousand.

Beyond a weak protest the day that I began work for Daskam & Howe the girl manager of the addressing department made no objection to my stopping work every day at four o'clock. That gave me time to eat a second cold lunch, and report at the West Side headquarters of the Suffrage Party by five. When applying for the position I told Miss Madeline Marks that I would be glad to be assigned to the tenement section of her district. Thereupon she assured me that she felt sure that I would be more useful on Riverside Drive and the adjacent side streets. So taking a list of voters to be seen, and a package of little yellow pledge-slips, I sallied forth.

The first voter on whom I called, like other individuals whom custom clothes in trousers, suffered from the hallucination of thinking himself a man. When I opened the conversation by saying that I had feared not finding him at home so early, five o'clock, he explained that, being a “gentleman of leisure,” he was always at home to charming ladies. Being aware that the race of fools had not been entirely exterminated, I allowed his explanation, along with the accompanying smirk, to pass unnoticed, and proceeded to business.

At the mention of suffrage his back stiffened and his eyes flashed green. When I offered him one of the yellow pledge-slips, asked him to sign it, he broke forth:

“You women!” he spit at me. “You’ve lost all sense of decency. Do you realize that our country is at war? Do you realize that men are dying? Do you realize it? Do you realize it?”

“I realize all of it,” I told him, rising to my feet, and I

think my eyes flashed green. "Besides, I realize that every man at the front—fighting, dying, and dead—was brought into the world by a woman, who went through the jaws of death, suffered the pangs of hell, to give him birth." I walked to the door of the drawing-room, then turned and glared at him, standing speechless beside his chair. "There's something else I realize—the pity of it that a man like you has to be born of a woman, when you might just as well have been hatched out of a goose-egg."

The footman, whom I had looked upon as an impassive piece of furniture, followed me out on the stoop.

"If you'll give me one, lady," he said, "I'll be glad to sign it and send it in by mail."

Halting on the corner I took myself to task. I admitted without regret that I had inherited all the temper of my Huguenot and Scot ancestors. What I did regret was having lost control of that temper, acting, as I considered, like a shrew. The following afternoon Miss Marks showed me two signed slips mailed from the same address—master and footman had pledged themselves to vote for the suffrage amendment.

"Lose your temper!—act like a shrew!" Miss Marks exclaimed, when I described the incident. "Do anything to get results like that. Why, that man has been for years a violent Anti."

It was an Anti who converted me, made a living, working suffragist of me. The scene of my conversion was the State House of Massachusetts. The Suffrage Party was making its annual appeal to the lawmakers of their commonwealth. I attended the meeting because of a promise made, years before, to Mrs. Julia Ward Howe, not because of my interest in suffrage.

While in college Mrs. Howe had asked me to attend such a meeting, and I, because it was easier to say yes than no, had promised to do so. Not having any interest in the



question, I forgot all about it until I learned from the *Transcript* that the meeting had taken place, and that Mrs. Howe had been the chief speaker. Having been brought up in the faith that no well-bred man or woman will intentionally break a promise, I hastened to call on Mrs. Howe and apologize. I told her the truth—that I had forgotten.

As always, Mrs. Howe was kind and sympathetic. When I was telling her good-by, while she was still holding my hands, she asked me to give her another promise—to attend such a meeting at the State House at my earliest opportunity. That opportunity came while I was taking a graduate course at Radcliffe—Professor Baker’s course in playwriting.

Learning from the morning paper that the Suffrage Party was to make its annual appeal in the State House that afternoon, quite a little while after the appointed hour I drifted in. It was a long room with high ceiling, and I knew that the broad windows on the side facing the door by which I entered overlooked Charlestown and the Charles River.

That side, the Charles River side, was packed—every seat taken, and numbers of women standing against the wall. On the side next the door there were a good many vacant seats, and without giving the matter a thought, I took my place beside a woman, who, catching my eye, made room for me. There were several speeches for and against.

Then a little wisp of a woman got up. She had the face of a blighted new-born baby—wrinkled and old as the human race. And in her eyes there shone the patient acceptance of the curse: “The sins of the fathers shall be visited on their children, to the third and fourth generation.”

She was from Lawrence, Massachusetts, and had been working in the mills since she was ten years old. For years

she had supported her delicate mother and her younger brothers and sisters. These younger ones, having been forced into the mills before they were strong enough, had sickened and dropped off like so many flies. So at last she was left the sole support of a bedridden mother.

She told of conditions in the mills, and I knew she spoke the truth. For it was soon after the notorious "Lawrence strike," during which I had journeyed down from Cambridge and spent a week in the mill town. This ill-fed little feminine creature, who had never known a care-free day in her whole life, ended her statement with the appeal:

"Gentlemen, you tell me a woman's place is the home. Ah, gentlemen, if I only had a home I'd be too glad to stay in it. I know you can't give me a home—there are too many like me. But you can give me the ballot." She bent toward the men on the rostrum, the law-makers. "Please give it to me," she pleaded, her little voice so husky that it was hardly more than a hoarse whisper. "Please give me the ballot. Then I can vote, stand a chance of getting my work hours limited. You don't let 'em work a horse day and night, gentlemen. Give me a horse's chance. Give me the ballot, gentlemen."

There may have been applause when she slipped back into her seat. But if so I was unconscious of it. My heart was like a throbbing, aching tooth in my bosom. Was there really a God in heaven?

Then across the aisle from the little woman a man stepped out. Such a man as would make you feel sure that at his birth his mother might have proclaimed with pride: "Behold, I have brought forth a man child; a man made in the image of his Maker."

From the tips of his polished shoes to the crown of his waving iron-gray hair he personified "the best"—the best breed, the best care, the best food, the best education, the best fashion, always the best and only the best. The

jewel in his scarf-pin or one of the rings on his hand would have made the puny factory worker comfortable for the balance of her days, would have given her a home.

The way he railed at her—that great, strong, well-fed, handsomely dressed, handsome man. He not only shook his finger in her face, but he threatened her and all suffragists against following the example of the militant Englishwomen, who he claimed had poured acid in the letter-boxes of London. While I did not see him actually grit his teeth, that was his manner—gritting his teeth and foaming at the mouth with fury.

At the end he gathered himself together, raising himself to his full height, and proclaimed his contempt for the women before him. The "ladies" of his acquaintance not only would refuse to vote were the ballot given them, but they would draw their skirts aside to keep from coming in contact with such despicable representatives of their sex.

When he finished, the women around me clapped and shouted like mad. Amazed, I turned to the woman next me and asked what she meant by it.

"He's on our side," she told me, her face glowing with satisfied pride. "He is our chief speaker. Applaud him. Applaud him."

I saw a great light. In my stupidity I had taken a seat among the Antis. Rising I crossed over the aisle. There was no seat, so I took my stand at the back of the room against the wall. A hand reached back and touched me.

"I recognized you," a sweet voice whispered, "and I knew you had gotten in the wrong pew." It was a daughter of Mrs. Julia Ward Howe.

As a result of that man's harangue a few months later I travelled more than one hundred miles to march in the suffrage parade through Boston. Now I not only worked for the sake of rubbing my rabbit's foot and giving them

the victory, but for the sake of getting behind the scenes and learning by my own personal observations whether or no the women leaders of the party were competent executives.

I held a good many positions during my four years in the underbrush. In none did I find more competent leadership. In none did I ever see such indomitable pluck and perseverance, such undaunted courage. It takes courage, real courage, to work on regardless of insult and flattery. Especially when the insults and sneers come from those with whom you are the most closely associated. It takes pluck and perseverance to lay siege and to hammer and hammer and hammer to break down prejudice in small minds. That is what being a leader of the Suffrage Party meant.

At the end of my week I was paid the promised ten dollars as promptly as I would have been by any other first-class business organization. On Monday evening I marched in the last suffrage parade in New York City, from the West Side headquarters to Durland's. Much to the surprise of the marchers about me I insisted on carrying both a heavy banner and a transparency.

The day after that election which gave the women of New York State the ballot I went to work for the International Young Men's Christian Association—proof-reader in the multigraph department, otherwise known as the "guts" of the Association. Through our hands passed every order, every report, every circular of every sort before it was given to the public. Down in two little dark basement rooms we worked under electricity from eighty-three until—many times after 10 P. M.

## CHAPTER XIV

### STAMPING-GROUND OF THE MONKEY-PEOPLE

"It was colossal!" Hildegard Hook panted boisterously, as she burst into my room about four o'clock one morning during the Christmas holidays. "My ideal marriage—eleven o'clock at night, in a dark church with only the minister, the two contracting parties, and her best friend present. And Joe Ellen didn't even change her dress—didn't even sew up the slit in the back of her skirt." Here she stopped panting long enough to laugh loud and long, after the manner of Greenwich Villagers too self-consciously innocent to consider the sleeper in the next room. "Harris had on his old yellow-and-purple Mackinaw, out at both elbows, and I think—yes, I'm sure, the pants he had on were the pair given him by my burglar." Here she jounced herself down on the side of my bed, and drawing the pins from her hat, cast it on the top of my bureau. The pins she stuck into the mattress. "Now, dear, don't you agree with me that it was an ideal marriage?—that is, of course, since our atrocious laws force us to go through that silly ceremony. Now don't you think it an ideal way for two poets to be married?—so characteristic, so filled with color. Two struggling young geniuses!"

"Is Harris a poet?" I questioned, as, having edged as far away from her as the wall would permit, I sat up in bed. "I've read several of Joe Ellen's verses in the magazines. What's Harris's other name? What has he written?"

"Casey—Harris Casey. Such a romantic name! Two epics and no end of lyrics. Jack Harland says that Harris's

longer epic is the most colossal thing in the English language since 'Childe Harold.' While I'm not sure that Jack will ever accomplish anything worth while in the creative field, you must admit that he is a perfectly colossal critic. You do admit it?" she questioned so earnestly that any one entering the room might have fancied that she pled for the salvation of her immortal soul.

"'Childe Harold' is not quite in the form of—" I began, determined not to be led into a controversy so early in the morning, for I still cherished the hope that she would take herself off.

"Form!" Hildegarde cried, as though invoking her patron saint. "Form! the chief difference between poetry and prose. 'Paradise Lost' and 'Lucile,' for instance—both tragedies, in a way, yet each a different form. You don't mind if I slip my feet under the cover for a bit?—I've taken off my slippers."

Without waiting for my reply she hoisted up her feet and began to tug at the bedclothes. Such looking feet! Her black stockings were without toes and heels and her bare flesh glistened with moisture.

"Your feet are sopping wet!" I involuntarily expostulated.

"I never take cold," she assured me, in the act of sticking her feet between my sheets.

"Please," I begged, grabbing the bedclothes from her hands. "Please, get that bath-towel over there and dry them—give them a good rubbing. No use taking risks when you don't need to."

"Risks!" she scoffed, in the act of stripping off one wet and tattered stocking. "That's what my burglar and I disputed about. We've been sitting on a bench in Washington Square since twelve——"

"Of all things! And the ground covered with snow."

"He brushed off a bench and I am never conscious of

my body when enthused," she reproved me. "He is a stubborn man, but he finally had to admit the justice of my argument—considering the risks in an undertaking is the quickest way to insure defeat. Only a weak individuality will consider risks. Once I make up my mind to do a thing, I do it."

She was rubbing one foot with my face-towel after having tossed her stocking on my pin-cushion.

"While making up your mind, don't you consider the risks?" I inquired, huddling up in the far corner of the bed. The thought of having her cold feet come in contact with my flesh made me feel like climbing over the head-board.

"Not at all. Not at *all*," she replied emphatically, as she let fly her second wet stocking and it landed on the fresh shirt-waist I had been so careful to hang on the back of a chair. "When the colossal idea of opening a tea-room struck me, instead of considering risks as a person of weaker mentality undoubtedly would, I went ahead and did. Now see where I am!—until this freeze came and burst my water-pipes and the gas froze on me I was feeding half the village."

"Half the village," I murmured, at a loss for words—only a few days before Christmas her younger sister, a hard-working, serious girl, had been forced to pay two hundred and fifty dollars to keep Hildegard's eating-place from being closed. Having lived in the house with Hildegard for more than three months, I realized the hopelessness of attempting to make her see the truth, so I changed the subject. "You didn't finish telling me about the two poets. Did they go on a wedding trip?"

"They are spending the night in my shop," she told me, still busy rubbing her toes.

"What on earth?" I questioned, so amazed that I forgot to notice that she was slipping her feet between my sheets.

"You have no sleeping arrangements—only small tables and narrow benches."

"Joe Ellen said it was better than taking Harris to her room and to-morrow morning being ordered to leave the house or produce their marriage license. They don't intend the general public to know of their marriage—not until they find a publisher for their first book of poems in collaboration."

"Oh!" was my meek reply, as I wondered why she had let me into such an important secret. "They might have gone to a hotel," was my next remark, and being a normal idea it was so far out of focus that it impressed me as an inspiration.

"Hotel?" she questioned indignantly. "That would have killed every bit of romance. Besides, Joe Ellen only had seven dollars and a half—a check she received for one of her short poems. Then, of course, as Mr. Freeland pointed out, there was Harris's clothes."

"Who is he?"

"Mr. Freeland? He would have been best man had he received Harris's note in time. It was he who discovered Harris—a terrible night last November. Harris had come up from Texas and was selling papers with his feet wrapped in an old piece of carpet he had fished out of a garbage-can."

Just what had become of my sense of humor that night I have never been able to decide. Certainly it was not with me. Instead of howling with laughter my brain felt as an egg looks when it is being prepared for scrambling.

"Did Joe Ellen know him in Texas?" I asked, still feebly keeping to the details of the affair.

"Exactly three days to the hour—that's the reason they were married at eleven o'clock at night—exactly three days to the minute that they first met each other. Romance! Only a genius with Joe Ellen's colossal brain



could have thought out such a perfect climax. You won't mind if I take your other pillow, will you, dear?"

"Oh, no, certainly not," I assured her, as I hastily extracted one of the two minute pillows from behind my back and handed it to her. As she settled herself, her head at the foot of my bed and her feet in the comfortably warm spot on which my shoulders had rested previous to her bursting into my room, I meekly inquired: "Anybody in your room?"

"My burglar," she answered in the matter-of-fact tone of one agreeing that two and two make four. "I hadn't thought of bringing him in until he noticed that the policeman making his rounds looked at us. He got an idea that the officer was coming back and tell us to move on just to get a good look at him. He's awfully psychic about policemen—says all men who have served three terms in Sing Sing are. Of course, if it had been the regular park policeman"—here she yawned and moved her feet nearer my corner of refuge—"it would have been all right. I've helped him take drunken women to Jefferson Market jail so often that we've got to be real pals."

She had hardly finished this last sentence when she began to snore, her buttonhole mouth wide open and her nose startingly like the beak of a parrot. Convinced that I would never be able to get back to sleep with such a noise so near, I slipped out of bed and proceeded to get my breakfast with a tiny alcohol-lamp.

That was in the midst of one of the severest blizzards ever experienced in New York City. It was impossible to get coal, and gas-pipes all over town had frozen and burst. In spite of the warmth of my heavy blanket bath-robe I was chilled to the bone.

I was sitting on my feet and eating my breakfast—a cup of hot tea without milk or sugar, and war bread with margarine—when I heard a plank in the hall outside my door

groan. The burglar! Creeping noiselessly to the door I listened. Some creature was trying to pass without detection across the carpeted floor of the square hall. A second plank groaned.

Opening my door to a crack I peered out. The candle in a saucer which our landlady, Miss O'Brien, had placed on a trunk the night before as a substitute for the gas-jet, had burned out. At first I could see nothing. Then I made out a tall oblong of duskiness—the doorway leading to the staircase. The next instant a dark object filled the dusky space. Another instant and the object disappeared. After a short wait I crept out and looked over the banisters.

Once or twice, perhaps three times, I made out a sound so soft that it seemed an echo of the footfall of a cat on the carpeted stairs. Finally there came a sharp click that sent a gentle tremor through the house—the front door had opened and closed. Hurrying back to my room, regardless of the freezing air I threw up the little window and stuck my head far out. Approaching the electric light at the MacDougal Street corner of the square was what looked to be a comfortably dressed working man. He was walking quietly along—evidently on his way to or from work.

My interest in Hildegarde Hook had been awakened by her telling me of her first meeting with this man, whom she always spoke of as "my burglar"—she never knew his name.

"You know, I never really wake up until after twelve at night," she had assured me. "Mother is like that—mother and I are just alike except that mother hasn't my colossal brain. She says so herself." Such was the introduction with which she always began her description of the incident.

A stormy night during the previous winter she took shelter under the arcade in front of Madison Square Garden, waiting for a particularly heavy downpour to

slacken. It was bitterly cold, and she noted that the only lighted window in sight was that of the American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals. She was just debating applying for shelter in the Society room on the plea of being a human animal, when she became aware that another person was occupying the opposite door-jamb.

"Say, sis," a man's voice whispered, "kin youse see the door to that cigar-store at corner of Twenty-seventh Street?" When Hildegard replied that she could, the voice added: "Keep your lamps peeled; when youse see that cop hidin' in the shadder 'cross the corner go in, gimme the git-away, liker good gal."

Until then Hildegard had not noticed the dark figure of the policeman, so nearly did his rain-washed rubber coat and helmet match the moist and glistening darkness surrounding him. Standing there in the doorway of Madison Square Garden she learned that the man who had spoken to her had served three terms in the penitentiary for burglary, and was wanted for a fourth offense. He had mistaken her for a "woman of the streets" and naturally supposed that she also was hiding from the rubber-clad officer of the law.

When finally the policeman did enter the cigar-store Hildegard and the burglar flitted around the corner at East Twenty-sixth Street, and hastened to the safer shadows of Lexington Avenue. Seated on a bench in Stuyvesant Square in the pouring rain, Hildegard insisted that the burglar had "made a full confession," and promised to lead an honest life. To further this end she required him to meet her once each month, at twelve o'clock at night, usually in Washington Square.

As proof-reader in the multigraph department of the International Y. M. C. A. my wage was twelve dollars a week, and I found it the most uninteresting of all the positions held during my four years in the underbrush. This was

doubtless because it was something I had done before. Not only had I read proof, but I had worked in a crowded dark basement under electric lights, and for long hours. Reading the annual reports of the Y. M. C. A. secretaries from about every country of the world was something of a novelty, though many of them were far from interesting.

What I did enjoy was the atmosphere, the spirit of the place—everybody spoke to everybody, and always with smiling courtesy. It was charming. Also it was comfortable to know that however ignorant you might be you would not be snubbed nor sneered at. The war had increased the work so much that the building on East Twenty-eighth Street swarmed with workers. Practically every day a new department was organized, only to be moved out the next day for the sake of getting larger quarters, and to make room for yet another new branch of work.

For a good many years I had heard the two "Ys" sneered at for being "sectarian." While at the Jane Leonard, Miss Stafford had retorted to my praise of the Y. W.: "Being a Catholic you know what I think of the Young Woman's *Christian Association*." She then assured me that both the Y. W. and the Y. M. were so "dead against Catholics" that they even refused to list them in their employment departments.

In the multigraph department at the International Headquarters of the Y. M. I worked shoulder to shoulder with a young Catholic woman. Though she was not particularly efficient, she had held the position for several years; indeed, ever since she left school. Her younger sister was the private secretary of the head of one of the departments. Both these Catholic women had gotten their positions through the employment department of the Y. W.

In the lunch-room of the International Headquarters I met several other Catholic women, all earning their daily bread working for the Y. M. I neither saw nor heard of

their being discriminated against. One of them boasted to me:

"Being a Catholic I'm not expected to go to prayers. That gives me an extra half-hour to do with as I please. I usually run out and do a little shopping or looking around, the stores are so convenient."

Now, I hold no brief for any Church—I believe in Justice. In all my dealings with the two "Ys" I never saw the slightest indication that any creed was discriminated against.

Is it because the two "Ys" stand for progress that Catholics abuse them, belittle their work?

It may have been because of my long hours in the basement of the International Headquarters, or it may have been subsisting on such scanty meals—in any event soon after giving up my position in the multigraph department I was taken with a heavy cold. I know I had fever, for twice a day my pillows and sheets were saturated with perspiration. My head felt as big as a bushel measure, and was chockful of ache.

Struggle as hard as I might, and I did struggle, I couldn't get up sufficient strength to get down-stairs, even though after hours of struggle I succeeded in putting on my clothes. The first Sunday of this illness I think I must have been in a measure delirious, for I was obsessed by the idea that no hospital would take me in, that I must wait until Monday.

With that idea planted firmly in my mind, I pinned a note on the pin-cushion—the name of the physician I wished called on Monday, and to which hospital I was to be taken. A ten-cent bottle of vaseline being all I possessed in the way of medicine, I put it beside my pillow and between dozes ate it.

Sunday night I began to cough up the phlegm that had made my chest feel so painfully tight. Then I fell asleep,

such a good, sound sleep. When I wakened it was Monday forenoon, my head had become normal in size, and all the ache had disappeared. How weak I was! Trying to walk from the bed to the window I almost fainted.

If it had not been for Jack Harland, who also had a room on the top floor, I really don't know what would have become of me. Miss O'Brien never came near me, neither did Hildegarde Hook. Jack, my tall, long-legged boy, as I used to call him, came twice a day, morning and evening, to ask how I felt and learn what he could get for me in the way of food.

Later, when I was able partially to dress and keep my eyes open, he would come in evenings and read to me—the daily paper and parts of “Les Misérables” and of “Ninety-Three.” Wonderful Victor Hugo! When read by a sympathetic boy's voice these books become wonderful indeed.

The first time I was able to creep out, on returning, mounting the four flights of stairs to my room, I realized that something was the matter with my heart. Instead of hunting a job next day, as I had planned, I knew that I must wait until I got stronger. Working with a fluttery heart like that I might drop in my tracks at any moment.

I had paid a week's rent and still had five dollars in my pocketbook, so why worry? Of course I would be fit before the end of the week. When that time came not only was my heart as fluttery as ever, but I realized that I had gained precious little, if any, strength.

A problem faced me—must I give up my plan of living on my wages, go to the bank and get money to tide me over, or what? What would Polly Preston, who had no money in bank, do under the circumstances? How was I to feel as a working woman felt if I kept in the back of my mind the knowledge that I could go to the bank and

get money to tide me over a rough place? Again what would Polly Preston do?

On leaving a bench in Washington Square I returned to the rooming-house, and crawling up the stairs, I reached my room and took stock of my scanty wardrobe. It must be either my furs or my cloak. Fortunately, the weather was mild. I had exactly one dollar in my pocketbook, and to-morrow was rent day.

The following day I set out soon after breakfast, wearing both my cloak and furs over my coat suit. Recalling that I had seen one or more pawn-shops on Sixth Avenue in the vicinity of West Fourteenth Street, I went there. In the first I was told brusquely that they did not accept wearing apparel of any sort.

On leaving the second pawn-shop I held twenty dollars in my hand and was without my furs. Twenty dollars was ample provision for three weeks. Long before that time I would be able to get a good job now that work was so plentiful and so well paid.

Spending the rest of the day on a bench in Washington Square with a library book in my hand convinced me that I must find some other way of occupying my time if I was to gain strength. The afternoon paper solved that problem.

The U. S. Employment Bureau on East Twenty-second Street was in need of volunteer workers. On calling the next morning shortly after nine I found the street in front of the Bureau crowded by men. When finally, having wormed my way in and up the stairs, I made myself known and offered my services I was quickly placed—given a chair at a long make-shift table, planks on top of saw-horses, and told to register applicants willing to take work in shipyards.

That was a motley crowd—men holding jobs paying as high as five hundred dollars a month offered themselves

for positions paying one-fifth that amount, and men who had no work at all refused jobs, the only ones they were fitted for, at three dollars a day.

One dear old Frenchman I shall never forget. He had passed down the long line of registrars struggling to make himself understood when he reached me. Though he had lived in New York more than twenty years he could neither speak nor understand the American language.

He was a highly paid cabinetmaker. Up to the outbreak of the World War his family comprised himself, his wife, five sons, and little Hortense. When he reached me, a bright day when winter's smile seems spring, his little circle had dwindled within two years to himself and little Hortense. His five sons were under the poppies somewhere in France, his wife had died of a broken heart.

He acknowledged his age, past sixty, but insisted he still had strength enough to work for America and France. He would take any job, at any wage. I gave him a card and sent him to an employer who had specially stipulated that he would take no man over forty.

Within an hour that employer telephoned and asked for me. Instead of the blowing-up that the registrar at my elbow prophesied, he wished to thank me. The Frenchman was a tip-top workman, he said. Then he added:

"It's not often you find a person, man or woman, who knows when to break a rule. That's what I called you up for—to thank you for breaking my rule. If you find any more men like your Frenchman, don't ask his age, just send him along."

Learning that women were needed in the gas-mask factory at Long Island City, I got a card of introduction from the head of the woman's branch of the employment bureau, and journeyed out. This woman had told me that the wage was exceptional—twenty-five to forty a week.

As fifteen dollars a week had, up to that time, been the



highest I had received, and that for only a few weeks, I looked forward to making my fortune in the gas-mask factory in a few days. Another case of exaggerated wage. Fifteen dollars is what I was paid, and I would have had to work there a good long time before getting a raise.

As it happened I worked there two days, received my training and was made an inspector at fifteen dollars a week, then decided to find another job. The fumes of gasolene gave me a hideous headache, and besides I had seen large crowds of women turned away from the doors every day.

Returning to the employment offices of the Y. W., I stipulated that my next job must be work for the government, preferably in a munition plant. There were plenty of openings, and taking cards of introduction to several plants near New York City, I set out.

"Even if you don't find anything to suit you," the woman at the employment desk told me, "it will be helping us, letting us know what you think of the places."

"Send only mature women to that plant in Hoboken. They want night-workers," I advised her on my return. "Those other two places over in Jersey? If you have girls who have twenty dollars to spend before their wages begin to come in, send them there."

"But the clubwomen?" she questioned. "We were told that the clubwomen had thrown open their homes, would board women workers in those plants."

I showed her my figures, the lowest that I had been able to get, though directed by the employment office of the munition plant: three dollars a week for a small room, up two flights, seven dollars a week for two meals a day and three on Sundays, sixty cents car-fare,—that is if you caught a particular train making the trip for the purpose of taking munition workers.

"The wage being eleven dollars a week, girls working

there who room with and are fed by those clubwomen, will have just forty cents with which to get lunch, laundry, and any other little luxury," I went on. "And don't forget she doesn't get a dollar until the end of her second week. Her first week's pay is held until she leaves—God knows for why—and she is not paid for her second week until she finishes it. In the meantime she has to pay for everything in advance, board, lodging, and car-fare."

"Those clubwomen!" she exclaimed, in disgust. "The fuss they made about taking munition workers in their homes for the sake of helping the government."

"That's what being a worker means—everybody's prey," I replied, and the thought did not make me any the happier. "It's gouge and squeeze, and when only a flicker of life remains fling them in an almshouse or a pauper's grave. Ours is a Christian country."

During the two months that followed I worked a few days in a cigarette factory, in a second cracker factory, folded circulars, addressed envelopes, stamped envelopes, and folded more circulars. It was on this last job that I was taken for a labor organizer.

Having nothing else to say to the woman working at my elbow, I asked if that printing-house was open or closed shop. Within three minutes she pattered off, and held a lengthy conversation with the forewoman. Within another three minutes this forewoman had informed me that as the work was "running short," she would have no need of my services "right then."

Those two words, "right then," so I was informed, prevented that forewoman's dismissal from being a discharge. Had she discharged me I could have collected the wage due me; as I was "laid off," I had to wait until the next pay-day.

"There's more ways of killing a dog besides choking it to death with butter," the woman who explained the matter

to me added. "Some of these days—if the workers' day comes in my time—I'll do some of the choking."

On returning to my friend of the Y. W. employment department, she gave me a handful of cards.

"They're all good positions, but I know which you'll take," she told me. "It's the one with the smallest salary."

"Why? I'm working for my living, living on my earnings," I retorted, not a bit pleased by her declaration.

"Yes, but you've got an enormous amount of curiosity," she laughed at me. "That position is with the American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals. It's in the office, posting the books, and the salary is only fifteen a week. You'll take it because you want to see how it works."

I handed all the other cards back to her and set out for the offices of the A. S. P. C. A. There I was taken on and put to work at once—writing in a huge book the numbers for the current year of licensed dogs. It was not tenement work, but it touched the tenements and that pleased me.

During my second week, on learning that the society needed license inspectors to take the place of the men who had gone to the front, I determined to apply. When told by a man in the office that the positions were for men only, I did not change my mind. Up I marched to Mr. Horton's office.

"Well," said Mr. Horton, the manager, "we never have had a woman inspector. Still, I don't know any reason why a woman shouldn't hold the position. Do you know what the salary is?"

"No, sir."

Mr. Horton smiled.

"Do you know what the duties are?"

"No, sir."

Mr. Horton smiled again.

"Most of your work will be in the tenements, from house

to house. Often from flat to flat. You'll have to go wherever there is a dog—to see if it is licensed, healthy, and well cared for.”

It so happened that I did know all this. That was my reason for wanting the job—it would take me into the tenements, to meet tenement-dwellers face to face as fellow human beings. I would see the homes from which the men and girls, my fellow workers for so many months, come.

At last I was going into the tenements, stepping into a more dense section of the underbrush, where I would get at least glimpses of the heart of the jungle.

## CHAPTER XV

### THE HEART OF THE JUNGLE

THE tenements of New York City! The change that I made—working with tenement-dwellers and living in rooming-houses to working in and living in the tenements—was like that experienced by a hunter when stepping from the outskirts to the depths of a jungle—a jungle abounding in treacherous quicksands and infested by the most venomous and noisome creatures of the animal kingdom—a swamp in which any misstep may plunge you into the choking depths of a quagmire or the coils of a slimy reptile.

But there are two great differences between the jungles of civilization and those created by nature. In nature's works there is always beauty—however noxious the creature, however venomous the reptile, there is always beauty. The tenements of New York City are monstrously hideous.

In nature's jungles the evolution is always upward from protoplasm to that most perfect of animals—man made in the image of his Maker. In the jungles of civilization the evolution is always downward—from man to beast, to reptile, and to that most noisome of living creatures, the human worm.

In the tenements of New York City we see the forced de-civilization of representatives of all the civilized peoples. In it there exist thousands more afflicted than Lazarus, thousands possessed of more devils than the Master cast out of the man of Gadarenes, thousands in whom the light of human intelligence will never even flicker. It is the greatest of all earthly hells. It is the product of human greed.

Comparing New York City to a jungle—the gilded zone of Fifth and Park Avenues are the tall timbers, the grove

of leisure and pleasure wherein the human animal having all that nature and civilization can supply is supposed to grow to perfection—the superman. Leaving this zone, going east or west, with every step leisure and pleasure grow rapidly less, farther and farther behind do we leave fresh air and sunshine, and all that makes life desirable.

I entered the tenements by two routes—as a social worker attached to Bellevue Hospital, and as a license inspector for the American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals. Polly Preston entered by yet another route—as a fugitive.

Even to-day as I write, with more than a thousand miles between me and New York City, I recall my work in the tenements as a social worker with a shiver. Social work is dispensing as charity that which should have been paid as wages. Had the wage been paid there would have been no rickety baby, no tubercular manhood and womanhood, no need for homes for incurables. It is underpaying that drives persons to live in the tenements, it is ill health or ignorance that keeps them there.

Possessing neither the blasphemous conceit formerly professed by Wilhelm Hohenzollern nor the sublime faith of the Pope, I did not enjoy acting as the personal representative of God Almighty. It used to make me sick as with nausea, more than once I was near to wringing my hands.

Who was I that honest, hard-working men and women should cringe before me?—poor overworked, underfed human beings who from their birth to their death never lost consciousness of the snarling presence of that hell-hound Poverty.

It was in my power to see that a quart of milk was delivered daily for Baby—real bottled grade A milk with all the cream in it. Johnnie was kept home for lack of shoes, and his father having been in the hospital going on five

weeks, and his mother's wages as scrubwoman only enough to buy food, there was no hope of his getting a pair unless—yes, I had the power to get for him a better pair than possessed by any boy on the Avenue. Wonderful lady! So all-powerful.

“Johnnie, bring a chair for the lady. Let 'er see what nice manners you've got.” And Johnnie, tripping over his own feet incased in a pair of men's shoes past mending and too broken for his father to wear, drags forward the only whole chair in the flat.

Another typical case was that of Mary Kane. The tenement in which I found her was like ninety-nine out of every hundred in New York City. Dark halls with crooked stairs and air foul for lack of ventilation and overcrowding.

“Stop cryin', Mamie. Here's a lady from Bellevue. Maybe she can get you to go to the country.” And her mother, haggard and overworked to the point of desperation, turns to me with a wan smile which, in her effort to make it gracious, becomes a ghastly grin.

When I reply that it is because the society sending convalescing children to the country had reported that Mary had not used the card entitling her to two weeks in their home that I have called, her grin becomes that of a beaten dog. Again it is lack of shoes and a few clothes. In this case the husband and father is not in Bellevue. He had stopped in the corner saloon on his way home with his wages.

Mary has a tendency to T. B. To spin her life out even a few months will require plenty of fresh air and the right kind of food.

Hospital social service is to supplement the work of the doctors and nurses of that particular hospital. Fortunately, Mary has been in Bellevue. I took her size and the number of her shoes, and promised to get them along with another card entitling her to another two weeks in the country.

Time passes and again we are notified that Mary has not used her card. On my return to the tenement practically the same scene confronted me. Only this time the mother had a black eye, the baby tugging at her breast was whimpering, and Mary seated near a window, the only window in the flat from which a glimpse of the sky may be had, looked more like a ghost than a living child.

Before I was well in the door the mother hustled me back again into the hall. In a neighbor's flat, a trifle lighter than her own because there were two windows in the front room opening on the street, she started to tell me her story. Because I had known many tenement wives and mothers I recognized that she was lying and stopped her.

"Who was that snoring in your back room?" I asked her. And fact by fact I draw the story from her.

The husband and father of the family had stolen the shoes and clothes sent for Mary, had sold them and gotten drunk on the proceeds. So drunk that— Oh, she didn't mind a black eye so much, she assured me. He didn't really mean it, being a good man when not in liquor. What she regretted was that he had missed two days at work.

Then with a grin like a cringing beaten dog she admitted that since Saturday noon she and Mary had lived on tea, without either milk or sugar, and part of a loaf of bread given her by a neighbor. To-morrow? Maybe by to-morrow her husband would be sober enough to return to his job.

Then came that terrible look—the look that made me want to wring my hands, to get off the earth, had such been possible. The look of a cringing human soul pleading to the All-Powerful for something dearer than life—to give Mary another chance.

A succession of such scenes is what entering the tenements as a social worker means. One sees only the ab-



normal, hears only the groans of the suffering, and of the misdeeds of the criminals.

Entering the tenements as an inspector of dog licenses for the A. S. P. C. A. brought me face to face with normal conditions—the well and the sick, the innocent and the criminal, the devils and the angels. I met them all, and so far as my time permitted I tried to get the point of view of each individual.

Hardest of all, I tried to get the point of view of the owners of tenement-houses—the originator or the perpetuator of the greatest of earthly hells. After working among and living in the property of the tenement-house owners for twenty-one months I believe that I succeeded.

GET MONEY—IT MAKES NO DIFFERENCE BY WHAT MEANS, GET MONEY—is the point of view of the owners of tenement-house property in New York City.

They have no civic pride, no pride of race, no feeling of brotherhood. Greed, that's all, GREED. Never do they consider the health or good name of the city, or the health or comfort of their tenants. It is get money, and more money.

Like the idle married woman, they are a curse, a mildew, sapping the very life-blood of those whose welfare and comfort should be their first aim.

Poverty of itself is not degrading. It is the filthy dens in which the poor of New York are forced to live that de-civilizes them, converting human beings into beasts and reptiles. I do not believe that Abraham Lincoln himself could have risen above a childhood passed in the average New York tenement.

It is not the location, for the tenements among which I worked occupy the healthiest and most convenient portions of Manhattan Island. It is the landlord—the eternal drive of the house-owner for money, and more money. I have talked with hundreds of them, and found but one

exception. That one was a stable-keeper, whose tenement-houses are situated in the lower gas-house district, and about whom I shall write farther on.

My remedy for tenement-house conditions is to make the owners live in them for twelve successive months. Force every tenement-owner to live with his or her family in the house that belongs to him or her, to pass one winter and one summer. What a cleaning up and tearing down there would be.

When that happens the police force of New York can be cut down to half, and the Health Department can go out of business. Neither the police nor the workers of the Health Department will have to do without city jobs. There will be room in the Department of Street-Cleaning. Then the cleaning will begin in those sections containing the greatest number of inhabitants, not in those having the most expensive property.

## CHAPTER XVI

### BURROWING IN

My going to live in the tenements came about in a round-about way. While existing in the Jane Leonard I let it be known that I was looking for a small flat in a tenement. The only one offered me was that of a young artist who had been called to Washington City by the government. It was in a "model tenement," had two rooms, a kitchen, electric lights, gas for cooking, steam-heat, hot and cold water, and the windows of the comfortably large living-room overlooked East River and Blackwell's Island.

"What more can you expect for the money?" Miss Stafford, who had learned of the place and insisted on taking me to see it, exclaimed pettishly when told that it was not what I wanted. "Five dollars and twenty cents a week! It really is remarkable. The furniture is fit for Fifth Avenue, real antique. They say Mr. Howard spent thousands furnishing it. On account of the river view, you know."

She lifted a window and with a flourish of her chubby hand indicated the sluggishly flowing river. And with another flourish the almshouse on Blackwell's Island.

"The house is so well kept," she assured me, as she turned from the window. "Such nice people live here. The agent is a lady of the old school. She told me herself that she never accepted a tenant without a thorough personal examination. I really can't see what more you want, since you have set your heart on living in a tenement."

The truth of the matter was that I did not want so much. To any one with even a superficial knowledge of tenement conditions the rent of the flat told the story. I

had already learned enough about the private affairs of my fellow workers to know that none of them lived in such expensive quarters. For the sake of getting sufficient room for their family they were forced to do without conveniences. At the premium station the girls had looked at me with awe when told that I paid two dollars and a half a week for one room. They lived in flats of from five to seven rooms, the rental of which was from ten to fifteen dollars a month. One of them, describing her home, said:

“We’ve got seven rooms, real large rooms, and only one is dark. It’s a cold-water flat. What you want a hot-water flat for?—pay for hot water and never get it. Mother says it’s better to have seven rooms and pay for gas when you needs hot water than to be packed in five rooms paying for hot water that you can never get.”

At that time the tenement-dweller who paid above twenty dollars a month rent either received an exceptionally high wage or had several children working. My experience had taught me that my neighbors in the model tenement would be of the lesser professional class and well paid office workers. I not only did not wish to live among such people, but I was dead set against having a lady-of-the-old-school agent. I wished to learn the truth about tenement conditions. However, I realized the uselessness of trying to explain to Miss Stafford. Though I talked all day she would not understand.

It was because I felt sure that Hildegarde Hook would understand that I went to live in the Greenwich Village rooming-house in which she spent her winters. But my faith in her understanding began a rapid evaporation the evening after I moved in.

Hildegarde was busy cleaning, with a grubbing-hoe, the basement in which she afterward conducted her tea-room. She invited me to dine with her. On learning that this,

my first meal, was to be cooked in her basement, I accepted with the proviso that I pay for all materials.

After my winter with Alice and observing the economies of the hat-trimmer, Hildegard's manner of buying seemed nothing short of reckless extravagance. At one of the most expensive stalls in Jefferson Market she bought lettuce, tomatoes, and hothouse cucumbers at a price that would have fed Alice and me for days. At yet another high-priced place she selected and I paid for a large loaf of bread, which she declared to be the only kind she ever ate. Next came salad dressing, unsalted butter, sugar, fresh cream cheese.

Sure that this would be all, I carefully folded and stored in the bottom of my bag the remains of my five-dollar bill. I did not know Hildegard. Declaring that the grade of foodstuffs carried in the Jefferson Market was a disgrace to the city, she led me to a meat-shop on a cross street.

Tenderloin steak! My hair almost stood on end. Three pounds! What on earth was she going to do with it? Then I had a happy thought. Such a cheerful solution. The next day being Sunday she planned for me to take all three meals with her. Though I cannot be sure that while paying for that steak I wore a smiling countenance, I am sure that I was not so glum as I most certainly would have been had I known what was to become of it.

Hildegard ate it—two pounds and three-quarters of underdone steak, at one sitting. When I said that I only wished a small piece, she gave me the bone. And she ate that red dripping meat without bread, potatoes, or vegetable of any sort—two pounds and three-quarters of underdone steak.

It was not an appetizing sight. When she had swallowed the last mouthful she explained that, being a meat-eater, she only ate other things for the sake of filling up. When she finished that process the provisions which I had believed

would last us both through Sunday had all disappeared—the last of the quarter of a pound of sweet butter together with the last of the pound of granulated sugar on the last slice of bread.

Our sightseeing began on a narrow street both crooked and short. Keeping pace with Hildegarde's eager steps I entered at one end and walking rapidly halted near the centre of the block.

"Sniff," panted Hildegarde. "Sniff."

"Why, it's a stench," I replied indignantly, and instead of sniffing I held my nose. "What on earth is it?"

"Cesspools," she assured me. "Those houses are awfully old. There is not a drain in this street. Typhoid in the summer, croup and pneumonia in the winter—people die like flies. Jack Harland says we may have a few cases of Asiatic cholera here this fall if the hot weather will only continue long enough."

I stared at her—a tall, voluptuously developed woman of twenty-six. Her eyes were large, blue-gray, and expressive. Her brows were dark and well defined, her mouth like a buttonhole. Her nose, though not large, curved over it, and reminded me of the beak of a parrot. Nature, as though begrudging the generous amount of material used in making one woman, had not only skimped her chin but taken a snip out of the middle of it.

"Don't you love it?" she panted, her face shining with enjoyment. "Don't you love it?"

"I think it is horrible that people have to live in such holes."

"W-e-e-ll, if you *will* look at it from a utilitarian point of view," my guide drawled patronizingly. Then she added with gusto: "From the point of the artist it is colossal. Swarms of 'em come here—for types, you know. The starving children of Belgium and famine sufferers—colossal studies!"

"Do you think they actually suffer for food?"

"My dear!" Hildegard stopped on the corner and catching me by the shoulder brought me to a sudden standstill. "I talked to a little girl who lived in that fifth house. The most desperate-looking child I ever saw. She told me she never had anything for breakfast before going to school except the dregs from a can of beer and a left-over potato, or a crust of bread. Sometimes she didn't get the beer—that depended on how drunk her parents were when they fell asleep. Colossal! Think of the literary atmosphere!"

"You come here for atmosphere?" I inquired, thinking that the effrontery needed to commercialize the misfortunes of that child was what was colossal.

"Not often," she replied, puckering her lips and drawing her brows together. "To tell the truth these people are too—too prosperous for me, for my purpose." Here squinting her eyes she thrust her face nearer mine. "To let you into a secret—I'm specializing on the underworld, crooks and their sort. My burglar took me to a joint on the East Side kept by one of the most famous crooks in New York,—in the whole world. All his customers are crooks. Colossal!"

Had I been a profane woman I would have called her a damned fool.

"It may not be safe for you—not exactly," Hildegard told me, panting eagerly. "But if you've got the pep I'm willing to take you. A policeman wouldn't dare go there alone. With me, having been introduced by my burglar, it's different. Would you like to go to-night?"

"Not to-night, thank you. I must be getting back."

"I'll go with you as far as Bleecker Street. It's on my way to the East Side joint to meet my burglar," she agreed, and we turned toward Washington Square.

"Have you written many stories about crooks?" I inquired, for, though she always spoke of herself as an author

and of everything she did, even the tea-room she was planning, as a means of getting material for her "real work," she had never mentioned the names of her stories.

"Not yet." She panted so vigorously and her eyes shone so eagerly that I was sure of having touched a subject she liked. "You see I specialize on one type at a time. My last before taking up crooks was newsboys."

"You wrote a newsboy story?"

"Newsboys who had made a fortune of one hundred thousand dollars and over. It was colossal. The editor told a friend of mine that it was the greatest spread that ever appeared in——"

"Spread?" I interrupted. "I thought you said you wrote short stories."

"Story-writing as you understand it is a dead art," she assured me solemnly. "Pictures! The future of the picture story is colossal."

That night before I fell asleep for the first time in my new quarters, I decided that Hildegarde was not one who would understand my determination to live in the tenements. I never confided in her.

During the months that followed, working day after day in the tenements, from eight-thirty in the morning to five of an afternoon, I never lost sight of that determination. Having decided to sublet a small furnished flat, I was continually on the lookout for it. Before I finally found such a flat, Miss O'Brien had demanded my room.

"Miss Porter, Miss Porter." She was standing on the parlor floor as she shouted up the stairs to me on the top floor. "I want your room, an' I want it at onct. An' I want you should know I'm a lady—I'll not be insulted in my own house."

The insult referred to was a note left on the hat-rack at the front door that morning on my way to work. In it I objected to having a strange man sleep in my bed during the day, while I was at work.



In Greenwich Village, when the origin of tobacco-smoke is feminine, it is invariably accompanied by crums of face-powder and smudges of rouge. There were no such marks on my bureau. But the odor of tobacco-smoke in the sheets of the bed! The signs of soot and grease grimed hands on my towels! I was paying four dollars and a half for my room, small with a slanting roof and a half-window on the top floor. I had no intention of sharing it with an unknown man even for the sake of helping my grunting, groaning landlady.

In more ways than one Miss O'Brien was out of the ordinary. Her name, her religion, and her brogue to the contrary, she boasted of being English. As a consequence she was not descended from an Irish king nor did she have a saint in her family. She was red-hot for suffrage, because she wanted a law passed to force women working outside the home to make their own beds and clean their own rooms.

"'Tain't right for women in business not to do their share of the housework," she would tell me, while leaning on a stub of a broom or wiping my mirror with a dirty rag. "I don't mind doin' for men—it's only right I should, they bein' men an' payin' me."

"The women pay you. I pay a half-dollar more than the man who vacated it without giving you notice. You told me so yourself."

"I ain't sayin' you don't pay all the room's worth," she assured me, and maybe by this time having smeared my mirror to her satisfaction she would be propped against the facing of my door. "What I says an' what I stands by is that it ain't right for you and Hildegard Hook not to do your rooms regular—you bein' women an' not men. No, it ain't right, Miss Porter. You hadn't oughter treat no woman like that."

When she found that I intended to take her at her word and give her her room, she became repentant and offered to

let me "stay on." Unfortunately for her good intentions the atmosphere of Greenwich Village had become boring. Even a woman's hotel, the only vacancy to be found at that season, promised a welcome relief.

My stay in that Adamless purgatory was not very long. Before I had been there one week an old woman occupying the room to the left of me objected to my using my typewriter between seven and eight in the evening. Before the end of my second week an old woman at my right positively forbade me to touch it mornings before eleven, and before I had completed my third week an old woman in front of me entered a violent protest against my using it at all. God defend me from idle women!

In a fit of I'll-take-anything-I-can-get I applied to the agent of the Phipps tenements. She had no vacancy, but on my second call, seeing that I was near desperation, she suggested that I go talk to a Mrs. Campbell who lived in another house owned by the same company. Mrs. Campbell was taking her sick daughter to Staten Island for the summer.

For five dollars a week, one dollar and sixty cents above what she was paying for her flat unfurnished, she sublet to me for the summer. There were three small rooms, a minute clothes-closet, a toilet, gas, and both hot and cold water.

On East Thirty-second Street between First and Second Avenues, this place was within walking distance of the A. S. P. C. A., and so saved both car-fare and time. Built around a court each of the forty-eight flats was so arranged that it opened on both the street and the court. As a consequence the ventilation was excellent. Four of the flats on each floor opened on a little balcony, and I was lucky enough to get one.

When I mentioned that there was no bath, Mrs. Campbell looked pensive. After a pause her daughter explained.

“There are two baths—one for men and the other for women. They are in the basement. Sundays people stand in line, taking turns at using them.” She paused and glanced at her mother, who was still gazing pensively into space. “We always—” She paused and again glanced at her mother.

“We always make out with the set tubs,” the older woman told me. “It’s not very handy, stooping under the china-closet, but it’s better than bathing in a tub used by so many.”

Glancing at the set tubs I realized the advantage of being small. It seemed an easy matter for these two little women to step on a chair and then into the tub, but how about big me? Yet I managed it somehow. That summer the only thing in the way of bathing I did was in that set tub; crouching under the built-in china cupboard, I splashed the water over various parts of my anatomy. Once you make up your mind you can do almost anything.

Unlike the model tenement in which the artist lived, this place was a slice of tenement life in New York City. Of the two blind sons of the Irishwoman who had the flat next mine, one went out daily with his little tin cup, while the other, who was not totally blind, made brooms in a workshop for the blind. Their unmarried sister was a trained nurse. The three supported the mother, who, being Irish, like Lot’s wife was continually looking back and weeping over past glories.

The flat beyond this family was occupied by the matron of one of the city courts; next came two more women, a Swede and Hollander. The first was a forewoman in a shirt-waist factory, the other before becoming a helpless cripple from rheumatism had been a dressmaker.

Across the court on the same floor was an Italian tailor with nine children, an undertaker’s assistant, a clerk in a Second Avenue grocery, and the driver of a milk-wagon.

Occupying other flats in the house were a stevedore, a Greek peddler, an Italian who helped in a coal-and-ice cellar, a Hungarian street-sweeper, a man who drove a dump-cart, a baker, a butcher, several factory workers, a cook, an incapacitated nurse, two Russians whose business nobody knew, and myself, who because of my khaki frock was called by the children the "army nurse."

Of June evenings, when I first moved in I used to sit on my doorstep, with my feet on the little balcony overlooking the court, and try to untangle the conversations being carried on around me in eleven foreign languages. As the days wore on, the July sun beat down on the tenements. When there was a breeze it was to be avoided, not enjoyed. Though hot and prickly in its feel, worse, many times worse, were the odors with which it was laden—the odors of decaying garbage and the filth of unwashed streets.

Those torrid summer nights! Instead of trying to untangle foreign tongues, I used to try to stop my ears against the wails of sick children, the weak frettings of a baby too far gone to make louder protests. When at last, worn out by hard work and lack of sleep, I would doze off, it was only to be wakened by the shriek of the baby's mother—never again in this world would her baby disturb her neighbors.

Or when by chance I managed to sleep through the first part of the night, the "French girl" would have a brain-storm and arouse the whole house. The nightmare scene that followed! Men, women, and children would rush out on their little balconies in their night-clothes. The more amiable would remonstrate with her, reminding her of the sick and sleeping children. A few, the two Russians and an Irishman, would curse the girl and threaten to call the police.

Though this girl was born in the United States, the daughter of native Germans, she persisted in calling her-

self French. Her mother was a cook in a private family and the girl herself had been trained as a lady's maid. Getting "notions" in her head, so the mother explained, she had proclaimed her intention of devoting herself to moving pictures.

Her brain-storms were caused by her parents suggesting that she return to her old job and earn her own living. The loud curses and abuse she hurled at them! When the pleadings and threats of their neighbors failed to stop this row, the musicians of the tenement would fetch out their instruments and practise usually for the rest of the night.

Hideous as this may sound, the blast of the cornet, the pipings of a flute and two piccolos, and the groans of a bass violin were no worse than the curses of the men and the wailings of the women and children. When the musicians kept at it long enough the "French girl" was shamed into silence or indistinct grumbling.

Then there were nights when there would be no sleep—only subdued cursing, complaints, and stench—the stench of unmoved garbage, of the unwashed streets, of the laundry opposite, and several other unclassified stenches. I used to get up in the mornings feeling worse than a wet rag—like a wet dish-rag saturated with stench.

All day long I trudged the streets, such filthy streets, with overflowing garbage-cans that had not been emptied for days and days. How I longed to possess the power which the people because of my khaki attributed to me!

"Lady, my baby is so sick. The landlord's done cut off the water, and I has to go up and down six flight of stairs to get every drop of water we use. Won't you please speak to the landlord, lady? My baby is so sick." This was a little Italian woman on lower First Avenue, the mother of six small children.

When I reminded her that I was not a city employee, that I had no authority, she came back at me with the state-

ment that I was educated, the landlord would listen to me. By actual count I found forty-nine children living on that top floor of that six-story flat-house. Not one of them looked to be above eight years old. Several of them were sick, and the mother of one family ill in bed.

Because the law forbade the owner of the house to raise the rent any higher on these, his regular tenants, he had hit on the happy idea of cutting off the water. He was out when I got his office on the wire. I left word with the woman's voice claiming to be his secretary that if the water was still cut off at four o'clock I would report the house to the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children.

This society may have been as helpless in the matter as the one I represented, but I didn't know of any other threat to make. It had the desired effect.

Hardly a day passed without at least one such appeal being made to me. It almost seemed that people had the idea that heartless landlords, dead horses, and deader cats were my specialty.

One woman trailed me three successive mornings in a house-to-house search from East Seventy-first Street to East Seventy-ninth and Exterior Streets. The first day she found me I was sitting on the river-wall in the shade of a derrick, eating my lunch—two Georgia peaches.

"It's just a chance I seen you," she called, as she crossed from the corner. "I told my daughter if I found you I know'd you'd do it, and I set out to find you." Halting in front of me she wiped the streaming perspiration from her purple and crimson blotched face.

"Sit down and tell me about it," I invited, making room for her in the scanty shade of the derrick. Though I had no recollection of her face, I knew she belonged in some one of the hundreds of homes that I had visited during the past few days.

"My grandbaby's got the browncreeters," she told me, as taking her seat at my side, she began to fan her face with her apron.

"Bronchitis is pretty serious for a young baby," I admitted; not knowing in what other way I could be of use to her I asked: "Do you want me to have it taken to Bellevue?"

She shook her head. "It's the dead horse, corner of Avenue A. You seen it the day you was at my daughter's about her dog, a French poodle."

If she had not mentioned the dead horse I certainly would not have remembered her daughter's dog. All white woolly dogs in the tenements, and about twenty-five per cent are white and woolly, are dignified by the name of French poodle. I did remember the dead horse.

"I promised your daughter to telephone the Health Department about that horse, and I did so," I replied, a bit nettled by her having chased me down after I had explained to her daughter and numerous others in the vicinity of that dead horse that I was not a city employee, had no authority to get dead animals moved.

"She knows you did. She watched and seen you go in the drug-store on the corner. Last night when her baby was took so bad her husband went after medicine, and the drug-store man told 'im you'd called up about the horse." In her eagerness to conciliate she stopped fanning and placed her hot hand on my arm. "They never done nothin'. This sun makes it worse—all swelled up and we's afraid it'll bust."

What could I say? I had done my best and nothing had come of it. Living in the tenements I knew how hideous night could be made by a stench. This dead horse was worse than anything that I had had to endure.

"I thought if I paid for the telephone you wouldn't mind speakin' again." Gouging down in her stocking she brought

up a rusty leather pocketbook. "My grandbaby's awful sick!"

There was no use trying to reason with her, trying to explain. Besides, it was a very small favor to ask for a sick baby.

She followed me to the nearest drug-store, stood at the door of the telephone-booth, and listened while I begged for the removal of the dead horse—called attention to the number of children in the vicinity, and made special mention of her sick grandbaby.

The next day but one I saw her coming toward me across the hot sun-baked playground of John Jay Park. There were deep circles under her eyes, and in spite of the heat her heavy cheeks were only slightly colored.

"I hunted for you yesterday, everywhere, but I missed you," she reproached, as I met her in the middle of the scorching-hot playground. "That dead horse— It's terrible and the dogs——"

"Come on," I interrupted, leading the way to the drug-store. "Now that the dogs are after it I can get it moved. That's what the society is for—protecting dogs."

Back in the same telephone-booth I called up the same city department, was answered by the same operator, who gave me the same official. After telling him that I was an inspector for the A. S. P. C. A., I told him of the dead horse, the number of days it had been on the street, and that the dogs were after it.

"You must give us time," he drawled. "New York is a good big city, you know, and——"

"Yes, and you get a good big salary," I clipped in, imitating his drawl, and making my voice as insolent as possible. "I don't care a whoop about your time. It's my business to protect the health of the dogs in this district. I report at Society headquarters every afternoon at five. On my way I shall make a point of passing that corner.



If I see any dogs around that dead horse I shall report it to our manager, Mr. Horton. He'll know what to do." I hung up the receiver with a snap.

As I stepped out of the booth the boy at the soda-fountain spoke to me.

"Telephoning about that dead horse, lady?" He shook his head as he filled a glass with fizz. "Wastin' good money. Must've been a hundred people in here in the last three days telephonin' about that horse."

"My grandbaby's so sick," the woman at my side wailed. "Seems like——"

"Much they care about sick babies!" the stouter of two young women for whom the boy was mixing drinks sneered, and she eyed me insolently. "They're too busy sweeping Park and Fifth Avenues—afraid the dust'll speck the white marble palaces of the millionaires."

She was good-looking, well dressed, and judging by her features and coloring a daughter of foreign parents, though she spoke without accent. Her manner was so pointedly offensive, so evidently aimed at me, that the woman at my side resented it.

"Tain't the lady's fault," she reproved the girl. "She's done all she could to get the dead horse took away."

"Sure she's done all she *could*," the girl retorted, taking her eyes off me long enough to wink at her thin companion. "But I've noticed that social workers never do anything that the rich don't want done. Oh, I'm not blaming you," she added, addressing me directly in the same sneering tone. "If I made my living distributing crumbs from millionaires' tables I'd do just as you do—perhaps."

"Perhaps you might," I consented cheerfully, glad to get a candid opinion of social workers from the class among whom they work. "But, as it happens, you've missed your guess. I'm an inspector for the A. S. P. C. A. That dead horse is a menace to the dogs in my district."

"Menace to dogs!" the thin girl giggled, and she broke the straw through which she was drinking. "Thinks they'll do more for dogs than children!"

"She thinks dead right. The animal society's got a lot of rich swells behind it," the soda boy asserted.

"That oughtn't to surprise you," the stout girl remarked, turning on her thin friend. "You heard that lady from Park Avenue"—how she sneered the word *lady*—"call that bow-legged little boy a monster because she thought he was mistreating a yellow pup."

With her soda-water still untasted she turned back to me. "Little bow-legs said he was seven, but he didn't look to be more than five. He'd been playing in the park with his younger brother and sister, and was taking them home. One of the younger ones was leading the pup, had a string in its collar. They'd got as far as Park Avenue when madame pounced on them. The names she called those three kids!"

"The pup was a poor, dear helpless doggie," the thin girl giggled.

"She said the pup was half-starved," the stout girl went on. "I believe she was right about that. The children didn't look as if either of them had ever had a square meal."

"That's the way they all are—those rich women," asserted a man in overalls, who was standing at the prescription-counter. "They think more of animals than of their own kind. What did youse say to the jane?"

"Who, us?" the thin girl giggled between draws on her straw. "We kept out of her sight. We work in a specialty shop on Fifth Avenue, and she was one of our regular customers."

"'Fraid of you job," the man in overalls commented. "Knockin' the bread out your own mouth wouldn't help the kids none."

"It would help the kids if we'd make the city government clean the tenement streets instead of wasting time dusting in front of vacant houses. They don't get much more than dust, and those houses are vacant ten months in the year," the stout girl asserted, as staring at me she waited for me to reply.

"If we lived up to our national professions," I said, putting into words the thought that had been in my mind since the first day I began to work in the tenements, "the street-cleaners would begin in the tenements, where the greatest number would be benefited. In a democracy where the majority is supposed to rule, human life should be considered before property—babies should be more valuable than empty houses."

"I see 'em starting to clean the streets in the tenements!" the thin girl jeered.

"If they don't you'll see tenement people living in those palaces, and the people from the palaces living in the tenements," the stout girl retorted passionately. "They done it in Russia and we'll do it here. Within ten years; I'm giving it to you straight."

"Youse said it," the man in overalls agreed emphatically.

I glanced into the faces of the six persons about me. The prescription clerk's features wore the mask of those whose mental attitude is I-hold-my-tongue-and-let-you-do-the-talking. The eyes of the pale boy at the soda-fountain were like smouldering fires ready to flame with any powerful emotion. The square jaw of the man in overalls reminded me of a bull-dog. Of the three women the stout girl alone possessed the faculty for logical reasoning, yet the other two, once their emotions were aroused, would outstrip her, run ahead of her, leading a mob to burn, kill, destroy.

"They've done it in Russia; we'll do it here." It was entirely evident that the five agreed with her assertion.

Ten years between our present condition and revolution! Her one alternative?—that the government stop sacrificing the masses in the interest of the classes. The reign of terror in France, the red horror in Russia—what would it be in the United States when our turn came?

On my way to the offices of the A. S. P. C. A. that afternoon I saw that the dead horse had been removed and the asphalt carefully washed clean.

“The animal society’s got rich swells behind it. Our children ain’t got nobody.” The words of the slumbrous-eyed boy at the soda-counter rang in my ears.

At that time influenza hung like a cloud no bigger than a man’s hand over New York City, from which it would spread over the whole Union.

## CHAPTER XVII

### THE SCOURGE

WHENEVER I think of the influenza epidemic in New York City there flashes before me a series of mental pictures, pictures so indelibly stamped on my mind that I believe they will go with me to the grave. In each of them, in all of them, I see myself walking through the slums of the great city as through the Valley of the shadow of Death.

But unlike the valley through which Christian passed I could not make out even the narrowest of safe pathways. So far as my vision extended my next step might plunge me into the ditch wherein the blind lead the blind, or into some bottomless quag. And always over me, over the whole of each of these pictures, Death spread his black wings.

In none of these pictures do I see myself ill with influenza. Yet I had it. According to my diary I remained in bed one day, took five capsules, and had one meal brought to me by a young music-teacher who occupied the room under mine in Miss O'Brien's Greenwich Village rooming-house. This young woman had a music class in New Jersey, from which after a lesson she returned with a slight cold. Within twenty-four hours she had an unmistakable case of the "flu."

Being the only other woman roomer—Hildegarde Hook having failed to make her tea-room go had gone to live in her basement—it fell to my lot to see that the music-teacher did not starve. Mornings before going to work I would go to Sixth Avenue and buy food and medicines to last her during the day, and evenings on my return from work I would again go shopping, getting what was necessary to make her night comfortable.

Just when she was able to crawl out of her bed I crawled into mine. Besides a few outstanding facts, all the details of my attack of influenza have been rubbed from my memory.

But nothing can ever erase, or I believe make less vivid, my memory of Bellevue Hospital during those terrible heart-breaking months—packed beyond its doors newly admitted patients had to wait in passageways on stretchers resting on chairs or other makeshift props. No sick person may be turned away from the doors of New York's great city hospital; room must be found for them however crowded the wards, however overworked the nurses and the doctors. How those nurses and doctors worked during the influenza! how everybody connected with Bellevue worked! To remain on duty, going without sleep and snatching a few mouthfuls of food when opportunity offered, was not considered worth mentioning—so many nurses and doctors did more.

While the pressure on Bellevue's staff of social service workers was very great, far above normal, it was not so continuous. Though their days did stretch into the nights they did finally get home for a few hours' rest and sleep. There are persons who claim that Miss Wadley, the head of the social service department, did not leave her desk during the entire epidemic;—that day and night she sat there at the telephone, listening to pleadings from parents that she send assistance to sick ones left at home, or to the demands of persons half-mad with anxiety that she locate for them some one dear to them who had failed to return home.

For that—the unexplained disappearance of persons—was one of the hideous features of the epidemic in the tenement districts. The workers of a family, scourged on by the additional necessity of having sickness in their home circle, would start out of a morning when they themselves

felt ready to drop. During the day, while at work, they would drop and be taken to a hospital. Even had their employers, or fellow employees, the inclination to notify the family of the stricken one, they would not be able to do so, because in ninety-nine cases out of a hundred they did not know their home address.

Because I was not a trained nurse Miss Wadley set me to work running down missing parents, and putting children orphaned during the epidemic out to board. It was while looking up the parents of Francisco LaCastro that I was first brought face to face with the puzzling dread caused by a person dropping out of sight. Miss Wadley was notified by the hospital that Francisco, though able to leave the hospital, had not been called for by his parents. She turned the case over to me. According to Francisco's entrance-card, he was three years old, and lived at a certain number on Sullivan Street.

Accustomed to tenement conditions, on reaching the address I set about looking for the janitor. After much knocking, the door was opened by a tiny girl. Yes, her mother was janitor—here the tiny mite began to sob. From her sobs I learned that a policeman in a hospital wagon had carried her mother off. Furthermore, that her father had been in a hospital, but was out and had gone to work. Also that three children older and two younger than herself were still in the hospital.

One of many peculiar features of tenement-dwellers is that few of them know the names of their neighbors, even when on intimate terms. A janitor knows the names of the persons occupying flats in her house because, on receiving rent, she has to give a receipt. This house on Sullivan Street was occupied exclusively by Italians. Though I called at every one of the twenty-four flats no one could tell me anything about the LaCastro family.

On the fifth floor my knock at one of the doors was not

answered. Deciding that this must be the flat occupied by Francisco's parents, I made a second trip through the house looking for some one who could tell me anything about the persons who lived in it. After many questions I finally learned that the silent flat had been occupied by the family of a man who brought home bread each night, "grand bread."

Nobody could tell me what had become of the man or his wife, only that two of his children had been taken away by their grandmother. Where did this grandmother live? Then recalling that a notification had been sent by Bellevue to Francisco's parents, I went after the postman. Fortunately, I found him on the block. He gave me an address on Bleecker Street.

I found the grandmother, an ancient Spanish dame, and with the aid of a five-year-old neighbor learned that she was treasuring six, to her unreadable, communications from Bellevue. Five of these were black-bordered, and announced the death of her daughter and four of that daughter's children. Francisco was the only member of her daughter's family left.

"But your daughter's husband, Francisco's father, what has become of him?" I asked.

When this was translated to her she shrugged her shoulders. When I asked my five-year-old interpreter what the old woman's shrug meant I received another shrug for my pains. Near my wits' end I hit on the plan of taking both ancient dame and interpreter to the bake-shop on the street floor of the house.

"Sure, I can speak to 'em," the young Russian woman behind the counter assured me. "I speak ten languages and about as many gibberishes."

Through this woman I learned that Francisco's father had gone to work the same as usual one day about two weeks back, and had never again been heard from. He was



a baker's helper, that everybody knew, but not one of them could tell, or even make a guess, where he worked. Only one of his children had been taken to the hospital before he disappeared. Again that shrug.

The next instant there came a wild jumble of sounds. As ignorant as I was of Spanish I recognized that the old woman who was filling the door of the bake-shop was cursing that other old woman, Francisco's grandmother. It was the other grandmother, the mother of Francisco's father.

She called down vengeance from heaven to punish the detractors of her son. He had not left home, deserted his family because a new baby was expected, nor because his eldest boy had been taken to Bellevue and the other children were ailing. Then wringing her hands she bewailed the loss of her son; she had worked, she had brought him to America, and now he had been murdered by some unknown enemy. How was she to find her boy?

This last wail being directed to me, the only American in the crowd of about one hundred collected about the entrance of the bake-shop, I asked the Russian woman to tell her about Francisco. On being made to understand she snatched the handful of Bellevue notices from the fingers of her son's mother-in-law. Though a poor woman with no money in bank, she hurled back at her rival, she would take care of her own flesh and blood, she would go at once for Francisco.

Without the formality of getting either hat or coat she boarded the next surface-car. On returning to Bellevue I learned that Francisco had been turned over to his grandmother. Writing out a history of the case I marked it closed.

Some ten days later, between eight and nine o'clock of an evening, there walked into the reception-room of the social service department a man so thin and pale that but

for the blackness of his clothes and the brown of his hair he might have been almost invisible. He asked to see his wife and four children, all in Bellevue.

Had he spoken to the man in the entrance office? Yes, and been sent to the social service department. That meant trouble—the straightening out of some tangle or, perhaps, breaking the news of a death.

Those of us workers in earshot stopped what we had been doing to listen. When the man gave his name, LaCastro, I realized that it was my task, and stepped forward.

Did he know that his mother had taken Francisco home? I asked. A wan smile and a flicker of light in his lustreless eyes as he told me he was glad to hear that. The friend who had gone out from the New York Hospital ahead of him had come back to tell him that his wife and all his children had been taken to Bellevue.

Yes, that was some time ago, soon after he came to himself in the hospital. He wasn't feeling very well when he left home that morning, and later when he fainted at his work the boss had him taken direct to the New York Hospital. Would I please tell him in which ward he would find his wife and four children.

I read him a part of Francisco's history, giving the date of each death. After a brief silence he asked if—if he might see them? Would he find them in the morgue? Feeling sure that he would be allowed, I started back to telephone, to find out if he must go around to the Twenty-ninth Street entrance.

He called me back. There was a flicker of the same light in his eyes that had shown when told that his mother had taken Francisco. Where was his baby? His wife was about to be confined. There must be a baby.

That meant going more deeply into the case. After telephoning back and forth I was told:

"Lived less than two hours." On giving him this additional blow I turned again to telephone the morgue.

"LaCastro?" the voice at the other end of the wire questioned. A short wait followed. "LaCastro, mother and baby, buried together, and four children. Yes, all buried the same day."

The expression of that man, not his face alone, but the whole man, remains stamped on my memory as typical of the tenement-dweller before the war—his meek acceptance of conditions, his humility as he thanked me. Sometimes I have wondered if Lazarus may not have thanked the dogs that licked his sores with the same expression, Lazarus starving, with feasting and plenty surrounding him.

Another hunt on which Miss Wadley sent me had a somewhat different ending. In this case the missing person was a baby of about eleven months. The mother, after seeing her husband and five older children taken to hospitals with influenza, had finally succumbed herself. Now, after being in Bellevue some twelve hours, she missed her baby. What had become of her baby? It was up to me to find out.

There came a time when I all but gave up hope of finding out. It was near the middle of the day, after I had run down everything that had the slightest semblance of a clew. It was in a tenement below Brooklyn Bridge, one of those tall, narrow tenements, jammed between other tall, narrow tenements. Dark and smelly, with crooked stone steps and slimy stone walls. The flat in which the family lived was on the next to the top floor, and by much searching I discovered a woman who knew them, and who also could speak enough English to tell me all she knew. Having begun with this woman, after four hours' fruitless search I came back to her.

Sure, she would show me the flat in which the Kouschitzky family lived. She had been there when the am-

balance came for the mother, and the officer had handed her the key. Having failed to learn anything by other means I thought there might be a chance of getting her to remember some fact, some clew overlooked or forgotten, by taking her into the flat.

We had hardly set foot in the rooms before her baby on the top floor began to yell. Mother-like she was out and running up the stairs before I caught my breath. Realizing that there was nothing for it but to wait, I dragged a chair to the one window showing a light nearest daylight, and sat down.

I was so tired that I must have dozed off for a second or two. Something aroused me, and listening I became conscious of a faint sound, something in the room stirring. The door of the flat was shut, the sound was between me and it. My heart in my mouth, I rose noiselessly to my feet and stood listening, listening hard.

The sound was more distinct though still faint. It was as though something, something soft was being dragged across the floor. Listening breathlessly I located the sound and turned my eyes toward the bed.

The dirtiest baby I had ever seen came crawling out. No floor-cloth was ever dirtier than that youngster's clothes. And it was as full of chuckles and coos as its clothes were of dust. Never a cry nor a whine. It cooed when I spoke to it, chuckled when I took it up. When the neighbor came racing back and gave it a sup of her baby's milk it gurgled with delight.

If my memories of the influenza epidemic could all end as my search for that baby did! There would be no long line of coffins before a church in the tenement districts waiting for burial. Neither could I call to mind a closed door, leading to the front room, the one room in the flat in which there was outside air.

The mother had died in Bellevue, two small children were

still there. The two older girls—both had been working before stricken down by the “flu”—refused to go to the hospital, stubbornly remaining at home. It was my second visit—made not because it was part of my work, but on my own initiative, in the hope of persuading them to go to a hospital. Failing in this, I asked:

“Why don’t you girls go into the front room? The windows open on the avenue; you’d get outside air. That court is no wider than a well.” I waited. Both girls cast down their eyes. Then I added: “I can get the woman next door to help me move your beds.” I made a move toward the entrance-door.

The elder of the two sisters threw out her hand. There was an expression of desperation in the gesture that brought me quickly to a halt.

“Father’s in there,” she said, in a soundless sort of tone.

“Your father?” I questioned, and for a moment fancied she had gone mad, for I distinctly recalled that they had told me of their father’s death, how he had insisted on going to their mother’s funeral and, catching more cold, had died that night. “Your father?” I repeated.

“It was Bridges, the undertaker,” the younger girl whispered. “He laid father out, and—and when he found that—that we didn’t have enough money to pay for a funeral, he said—he said he wouldn’t do no more.”

After all, is it more heartless to refuse to put a dead person in his grave when money is lacking to pay for a funeral than it is to put living persons out of their home when money is lacking to pay the rent? Many, many families were dispossessed in the tenement districts of New York during and immediately after the influenza epidemic. There was a great to-do made about undertakers taking advantage of people’s misfortunes. How about tenement landlords? I have seen enough of tenement conditions to know that the landlords, as a class, are better off in

this world's goods than the tenement undertakers as a class.

I am grateful that as an inspector of dog licenses for the American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals I saw the tenements of New York under more normal conditions. Though I remained in this work more than two years, and came to know my district about as well as the average New Yorker knows his back yard, there are houses the door-sills of which I dreaded to cross: the house in which I found a dying mother trying to suckle a dead baby; that in which I struggled with another mother, driven mad by fear for her children when her husband lost his job as a street-car conductor; and yet another in which I witnessed the return of a father from prison to his shattered home—his flat stripped of all that could be sold or pawned, his two children in Bellevue, and his wife and newborn baby on a bed loaned by a neighbor, both dying.

Did Dante picture a blacker hell than the slums of New York City during the influenza epidemic? In all those months of dread, suffering, despair, and death never once in those tenement districts did I meet or hear of a Protestant minister of the Gospel.

## CHAPTER XVIII

### JIST DOGS!

JIST dogs! Of all the positions held during my four years in the underbrush none appealed to me so much as that of license inspector for the American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals. It was ideal for my purpose—learning conditions in the tenements as actually existing, meeting the tenement-dwellers in their homes and as fellow human beings.

If the job were an easy one I would be more chary about making such a statement for fear all those persons living or being in Greenwich Village, who refer to themselves as "we villagers," would descend on the manager of the A. S. P. C. A. as boll-weevils take possession of a field of young and luxuriant cotton.

To prevent such a disaster I state definitely—a license inspector for the A. S. P. C. A. earns every penny of his or her salary. It is a house-to-house, rain-or-shine, freeze-or-sunstroke job. It means going up and down [stairs from eight-thirty in the morning to five in the afternoon. Wherever a dog is kept there must the inspector go.

My duties as a social service worker for Bellevue Hospital took me all over New York City—East Side and West Side, from the Bronx to the Battery. As inspector for the A. S. P. C. A. my district extended from the north side of East Fourteenth Street to the south side of East Seventy-ninth, from Madison Avenue to East River.

It included some of the oldest, most dilapidated, and slimiest of filthy tenements to be found in the greater city, and some of the newest, best planned, and best kept of

the model tenements. It also included many homes of well-to-do persons and many palaces of multimillionaires. It was a fair slice of the greatest jungle of civilization.

If there is a nationality on the globe not represented in that district, I never heard of it. It is a district in which anybody from anywhere may be met any day. Reading my diary it would seem that I met somebody from everywhere almost every day. That is, with one exception—I never met a Protestant minister of the Gospel.

Every profession, every trade in every walk of life, but never a Protestant minister of the Gospel.

The work was quite simple. On entering a tenement I would hunt up the janitor.

“How are you, janitor?” I would greet, and the rougher and more dishevelled the woman the more courteously sympathetic I would make my tone. “I’m your inspector and have come to go through your house.” Invariably on this announcement an expression of concern, sometimes amounting to consternation, would flash into her face. Then, always hastily, I would add: “I’m calling on all the dogs in your house. How many are there?”

“Oh, dogs!” she would exclaim, and the troubled expression would be wiped off by a look of relief, sometimes by a smile.

Often, instead of replying to my question, she would protest her regret that I was not some other variety of inspector—one who would make the Guineas up-stairs stop throwing garbage out their windows, or maybe reprove the drunken Irishwoman for cursing her. Once I let her begin on her personal woes and it meant a half-hour hold-up for me.

The woes of a tenement janitor are many and various—like setting traps on the stairs whereby she may fall and break her neck, or pelting her with rotten eggs. This last was a favorite method during the war of dealing with jan-



itors suspected of German sympathies. However high the cost of living might soar, an ample quantity of unfresh eggs could always be found among Italian tenants to chase a German janitor to her lair.

Jist dogs! Once past the janitor and provided with the number and location of all the dogs in her house I made my way, knocking at the doors behind which was supposed to be a dog.

"How do you do? I'm your inspector," I would greet the person opening the door. "I'm calling on your dog."

As with the janitor this statement of my business produced a reaction pleasing enough to put the person, usually the woman head of the family, in a good humor. Almost invariably she invited me in to rest or wait while she rummaged through various boxes and tin cans, searching for her dog's license.

It was when I accepted her invitation that I got real information. Chatting about the family pet led naturally to intimate details of her family life, her neighbors, their jobs and wages.

Some day, perhaps, a dog-loving writer will make a book about the exploits of dog heroes. Once he or she begins this work they will find many trails leading into the tenement homes of Greater New York. I found several real heroes among the dogs in my district.

One handsome collie had saved his mistress and a six months' old baby from being burned alive. The woman, having been unable to sleep for some time, was given a narcotic and fell asleep in the middle of the forenoon. An hour or so later she awoke: the dog was dragging her from her bed by the hair of her head. He had literally torn her night-dress into rags trying to arouse her. The room was stifling with smoke and her bed in flames.

The fire was supposed to have been started by a smoker in an upper story of the apartment-house throwing the

butt of his cigarette out the window and onto an awning over the woman's window. From the awning the curtain caught, and from that her bed.

In the next apartment a woman had put her six months' old baby to sleep and had gone up-stairs to visit a neighbor. A bit of the flaming awning was blown through the window and lighting in the baby's cradle set its pillow on fire.

This was not a question of self-preservation on the part of the dog. He was in the streets taking his morning run when his mistress took the narcotic. Knowing he would return shortly she left the outer door of her apartment ajar. The dog, had he been actuated by an instinct for self-preservation, might easily have fled from the flaming room and aroused the house by his barks. Instead he risked his own life to drag his mistress from the jaws of death.

Another dog hero lived on Avenue A: To him fate was not so kind as to the collie. When scarcely more than a pup he saved the life of a child. It is true the child was unknown to him, and his saving it was treated as a casual happening. Out walking at his master's heels on a Sunday afternoon, he chanced to be passing at the instant that a two-year-old child, having climbed on top of the one plank wall separating the island of Manhattan from the waters of East River, fell in.

"Right in after it went Buster, quicker'n a wink," the master, a little old cripple, told me when I paid my first call on this hero. "I'd taught 'im to jump in the river after sticks. I guess when he heard that baby's splash he thought it was a stick. He was right there when she comes up, an' got his teeth tangled in her skirts somehow. The way he paddled with those front paws of his'n. He kept his grip till they could get a boat to 'im and take the baby. Then Buster swum back to shore. He was that far gone I had to help 'im land."

While listening to the old man I was seated in his shop in the rear of one of the oldest and most dilapidated tenements in my district. Besides being the janitor of the tenement he was a mender of pots, pans, and all things of metal. The corners of his shop were heaped with a miscellaneous collection of metal articles, useful and ornamental, most of them of brass, copper, or wrought iron.

"I mends 'em and brushes 'em up a bit when work is slack," he explained, while tinkering an old brass kettle, mending a leak near the gracefully curved spout. "It's surprisin' the price some people will pay for that old junk when I rubs it up a bit.

"Don't need to have no clock down here," the old man went on, enjoying my interest in his dog. "Ten o'clock, twelve, three, and six, sharp, Buster comes for me. Them's the times my wife takes her medicine—she's bedrid, been like that twenty years. I used to try teasin' Buster, made like I didn't hear 'im bark. He caught on. Now he just puts his head in that door and barks onct and back he trots. He knows that's his job, I guess."

"His job?" I questioned, not understanding the tinker's reference.

Having finished mending the kettle he put it to one side and took up a grinning black face—part of an old wrought-iron fire-dog.

"Takin' care of my wife. She can't move nothin' but her hands, an' not them real well." He was rummaging through a box of old metal parts, trying to find a screw to fit the hole at the base of the grinning face. "I props 'er up in bed mornin's and gives 'er 'er breakfast. Buster does the rest—gets the comb and brush for 'er; when she finishes with 'em he puts 'em back on the table."

Having found a screw to his liking he held it between his teeth while he scraped the hole with a bit of wire.

"Italian woman and her daughter—they been livin' on

our top floor near thirty year—is the onliest ones Buster will let cross that door-sill whilst I'm out. The postman—" He chuckled, as he fitted the screw in the hole. "Buster hears 'is whistle and meets 'im at the door and takes the letters. Julie, my wife, says he knows when there's a letter from Jack."

Having fitted the screw to the grinning face he began the work of fastening it to the lower part of the fire-dog.

"Jack's our grandson. He's somewhere in France." Unconsciously he heaved a sigh that sounded almost like a sob. "Soon as Buster gives a letter from him to Julie, without her tellin' 'm nothin' he trots down here for me. He knows I wants the news quick as the letter comes. Buster knows."

Coming in contact with so many dogs, day after day, winding back and forth in and out of the dirty halls and crooked stairways of the tenements, memories of Buster and the lame tinker were rubbed from my mind. Among the bunch of complaints handed me one morning at the office was a pencil scrawl about a dog that was terrorizing the neighbors around an address on Avenue A.

When the door of the flat was opened to me I found myself confronted by the lame tinker, with Buster at his heels. Behind them in the duskiness of the room I made out the helpless figure of the wife, propped up in bed and combing her hair.

"This can't possibly refer to Buster," I told them, as I handed the scrawl to the old man.

"Crooks," he assured me, and having read the letter he passed it on to his wife.

"This is the only house in this block that hasn't been broke in," she piped, her voice thinned by weakness and much suffering. "It's Buster. Crooks can't git by my dog."

"It's a wonder they don't poison him," I told them,

recalling the number of dogs whose deaths their owners attributed to poison.

The old tinker glared up at me, a shrewd twinkle in his old eyes. Then smiling he waved one hand toward his wife.

"It's her," he said, with a chuckle of appreciation. "When he was a pup she trained 'im. He won't touch nothin' 'thout it goes through her hands, not even from me. When I goes to the butcher's and buys 'im a bone, he won't touch it until she tells 'im to."

"Tell the lady 'bout the pile of boiled sponges youse picked up in the yard," the sick woman reminded him.

"Sure! I muster picked up a hundred, fust and last, in the yard between this house and my shop. You see Buster sleeps in my shop nights."

"Will a sponge boiled in oil really kill a dog?" I asked, for I had heard so often since beginning to work in the tenements that such was the case.

The old man's face ceased to twinkle; Julie cast down her eyes and picked at her bed.

"It does worse'n kill 'em," she told me in a piping whisper. "It make's 'em pine away and they suffer so, howlin', squirmin' with pain, until you're glad to see 'em die."

"You see it's the sponge swellin' inside 'em," the tinker supplemented. "When you boils a sponge it natu'ly shrivels up to a hard knot. The dog gnaws it to get the oil,—swallows it. There ain't nothin' to be done unless you take all 'is insides out. We lost four that way before we got Buster."

Though I received four other pencilled scrawls written by the same hand I paid no attention to them. The matter faded from my mind. When I covered my district I turned about, and again beginning on the north side of East Fourteenth Street, worked my way up-town. When I reached the tinker's address I crossed the little back yard and stopped in the door of his shop.

He was busy mending a leak in an agate saucepan.

"You see I'm back again," I announced cheerfully. "No use asking if you have renewed Buster's license."

"Yes. I got it out," he replied, and though he paused in his work long enough to glance up at me he did not smile.

Such a different tinker! Something must have gone wrong. I glanced about the little shop. The place had been stripped. Except for the saucepan, a couple of pots, and his tools, all on the work-bench at his side, there was no evidence of his trade. The heaps of old brass, copper, and wrought iron that had filled all the corners were gone.

"You've had a clearing out," I said, letting him see me looking about the shop.

"Thieves," he replied, in the same colorless tone. "Broke in and carried off everything. These are new." He motioned to the few tools beside him.

"Where was Buster?"

"I had him killed."

I could not believe my ears. And the tragedy of the man's eyes!

"You had Buster killed! What had he done?"

"He hadn't done nothin' but what he had oughter do—what I'd taught 'im to do." His tone reminded me of a dense fog so saturated with grayness. "He bit a postman."

Pushing aside the two pots I took my seat on his work-bench.

"How did he happen to bite the postman?" I asked, thinking it might do him good to talk his trouble out. "I thought Buster and the postman understood each other?"

"He was a new postman, one of them fresh guys. Buster barked at 'im, and Julie called to 'im—warned 'im that the dog would bite. 'Stead of 'im doin' what he was told he tried to step into the room." He straightened up and his eyes flashed with pride. "Buster pounced on 'im, 'most

tore his shirt offen 'im. I wish to God he'd a tore his liver out, so I do."

"If he didn't draw blood why did you have him killed?" I demanded sternly, for in spite of my sympathy with the old man it appeared to me that the dog hadn't had a square deal.

"The postmaster wrote me a letter," he answered, as he fumbled in an old leather wallet.

It was on the official paper of the Post-Office Department of the United States, and was signed by the postmaster of New York City. Coldly official, it informed the old tinker that unless he got rid of the dog he would have to get his mail at the general delivery window of the general post-office.

"I tried to get 'em to leave my mail in the store next door, or with a friend in the next block." He shook his head. "It was get rid of Buster or go to the general post-office." He paused, but seeing that he had more to say I waited. "If it hadn't been for Jack's bein' somewheres in France, I'd a gone to the general office. Jack's all we've got, an' it didn't seem right we should risk not hearin' from 'im, or"—he paused and swallowed hard—"or the government in case anything happened to 'im."

Killing so faithful and intelligent a dog without a more serious attempt to placate the "fresh guy" seemed a dreadful act. But knowing the helplessness of the ignorant poor in New York City, I realized the injustice of finding fault with the old tinker.

Halting in the door of the shop on my way out I glanced back at its empty corners.

"I suppose the persons who wrote me those complaints against Buster did all this," I remarked. "It didn't take them long to find out that Buster was gone."

"They sandbagged the woman on our top floor the night after Buster was killed."

Amazed I turned and stared at the old tinker.

"You don't mean the old Italian mother, who was working and saving to get money to return to Italy and die in her old home?" I finally questioned.

The tinker nodded. He was scraping the bottom of a pot preparatory to applying solder.

"They most worked theyselves to death, her and her daughter. Done piece-work nights and Sundays," he told me, glancing up from his task of blowing on the charcoal in his little bucket with his little bellows. "The mother was goin' back, had drawed their savin' out the bank that day, an' was goin' down the next mornin' to pay for her passage and get the balance of her money changed. She stopped in on her way up to say a few words to Julie—she always done that evenin's comin' in from work. 'Bout half an hour later her daughter found her in the hall outside their door. She'd been knocked senseless and her clothes 'most tore off looking for her money."

There was a short silence and the old man began to tinker with the pot.

"Where is she now?" I asked.

"On the Island." The solder being melted he applied it to the hole in the bottom of the pot. "They kept her in Bellevue till they seen there wasn't no chance of curin' her. You see, it's her brain," he explained as he wiped his hands on his bedticking apron. "Some of it oozed out where the sand-bag broke her skull. It stands to reason she never can have right good sense again, and one side of her's paralyzed worse than Julie's."

Tommaso was a brindle and white mongrel. Though he had never rescued a woman, a baby, or any other human, so far as I learned, from a violent death, I number him first among the dog heroes of my district. His master and mistress, Mr. and Mrs. Pasquali Dominic, were both natives of Italy. Meeting for the first time in New York they were married at the City Hall August 9, 1898. Twenty



years, one week, and five days after this happy event I paid my first call on Tommaso.

Crouched in one corner of the family's basement kitchen-living-room-bedroom, he was trying not to watch too greedily the spoonfuls of thin porridge and the hunks of Italian bread being taken in alternate swallows by the five youngest of Mr. and Mrs. Dominic's eighteen children. Being a gentleman as well as a hero he rose on my entrance.

"Go way, Tommaso. Come in, lady; he don't bite," Mrs. Dominic greeted me.

On my accepting an invitation to take a seat Tommaso returned to his corner, and did his best to show me respectful attention while keeping watch for his hoped-for share of the food—the licking of each child's bowl, with a morsel of its bread.

"He a good dog," Mrs. Dominic assured me. "He take nothin' 'less I tell 'im. Lucretia, why you scrape your bowl? Give it to Tommaso. Good Tommaso."

Like a gentleman Tommaso accepted the offered bowl as though unconscious that the lickings had been scraped out, and without remarking on the total absence of his share of Lucretia's bread. In spite of the too evident joints of his back-bone and the prominence of his ribs he refused to give way to the cravings of his appetite.

Day after day he sat among those children, watched them take food which might have been his had he been a hero of lesser caliber—made a snatch and fled to the fastnesses of crooked stairs and dark hallways surrounding him.

Ah, Tommaso! I know what appetite suppression means. I know how it feels to watch other persons eat food of which you stand in need. I served as waitress in a fashionable hotel on the boardwalk in Atlantic City. Jist dogs—both of us, Tommaso!

## CHAPTER XIX

### FAITH OF JUNGLE-MOTHERS

"How did the war affect the tenement-dwellers?"

That question has been asked me dozens of times.

The happiest persons I met during the war were in the tenements. Also, I will add, the most unreasonably unhappy and discontented person I met during that period was in the tenements.

Shortly after eight-thirty one sunshiny morning, with just enough nip in the air, I was hurrying along East Twenty-sixth Street sorting over a handful of complaints when a hand clutched my arm. Glancing up as I was brought to a halt my eyes stared into as discontented and unhappy a face as I had ever seen.

"Where are you going?" the woman whose hand still clutched my shoulder demanded, and the movement of her lips breaking up the expression of discontent somewhat, I recognized one of the best known of American women novelists.

"How do you happen to be out so early?" I countered. "I remember your telling me that you never allowed anything to break into your mornings—that you always worked until noon."

"Work!" she exclaimed, throwing out her hand in a gesture of despair. "What's the use of work? I can't sell a line—not one line. They only want war, war, nothing but war. War! I'm sick of it. Why will people read about the war?"

"Because we've all got somebody at the front, I reckon—sons, brothers, husbands, sweethearts, or at least a friend," I replied, trying to make my tone pleasant.

There could be no doubt about the woman's harassed

state of mind, whatever the cause. There were deep furrows between her brows, and the lines at the corners of her eyes looked more like turkey feet than those of a crow.

"I have not," she exulted. "Not one drop of my blood is in this war. My family don't believe in war. We——"

"I've always noticed," I cut in, "that you conscientious objectors to war are damned careful to live and own property in a country that does believe in war."

My cheeks burned, and I have an idea that I closely resembled a spitting wildcat. But I had listened to all of that sort of talk I was going to swallow from Hildegarde Hook and her "we villagers" ilk.

"My dear!" she exclaimed, and I saw that my one poor little cuss word had shocked her. "I had no idea that you felt so—so keenly about—about the matter. If I had, of course——"

"Well, I do feel keenly about this war. I feel keenly with every drop of blood in my body. There's no use discussing it. You were speaking of your work. If you'd do publicity work——"

"Publicity work? I'd be only too glad to, but they say I've no training."

No training! A woman who had written a half-score of popular novels, a number of short stories, and a multitude of articles!—no training!

"But did they know who you are? Did you give your name?" I asked—the idea that this woman did not have sufficient training as a writer to do publicity work seemed the height of absurdity.

She shook her head. She had tried every organization, she assured me. At the beginning of hostilities she might have gotten a position in Washington City, but the salary seemed too small. Now she regretted having refused that—if she had only known that the war would last so long, and that people would continue to read only war stories!

She was over her head in debt, she told me. Every piece of property she possessed had been mortgaged up to the hilt. If the war continued she would be on the street, without even a roof to cover her. What must she do?

Yet when I told her what I was doing I saw the surprise in her eyes change to contempt. It was all right to go through the tenements, even to live in them, for the sake of getting material. To live there for the sake of making both ends meet, to make my living, or even to take money for my work! That was another matter—put me quite beyond the pale of her respect.

When I assured her that, beginning at one dollar a day, I had worked my way up to ninety dollars a month, I saw that the last amount sounded good to her. And I also saw that even as the salary offered by the government had not been large enough to get her to work for her country, ninety dollars was not sufficient to cause her to forget her "position" as a novelist. It was a case of debt rather than dishonor.

Suddenly she discovered a reason to take a hurried departure. I felt no inclination to detain her. While working my way from a dollar a day to ninety the month I had learned

"I am the master of my fate,  
I am the captain of my soul."

The chiefest of many reasons why tenement-dwellers appeared happily content during the war were: First, those who had sons, brothers, husbands, uncles, sweethearts, or cousins to the remotest degree in the service felt that they were doing their duty, a proud duty, to their country; second, workers were receiving a living wage, a vast majority living decently for the first time in their lives; third, they believed, they sincerely believed, that they were helping to "make the world safe for democracy."

They were convinced that the United States had entered the war, taken their sons across the Atlantic "that government of the people, by the people, for the people shall not perish from the earth." They believed it as they believed in God, as they believed in their own existence.

The older ones, those who had come to the country as immigrants, believed that America had actually become the wonderful Promised Land of their dreams. For hadn't they lived to see their own sons march down Fifth Avenue shoulder to shoulder with the sons of money kings? Didn't their daughters, on coming home nights, tell of the daughter of yet another money king working in the same room, actually taking orders from her?

They had lived to see the stigma taken off work. A human soul was a human soul, regardless of the "guinea's stamp."

Once the war was won they believed that condition would continue—that the sons and daughters of the rich and powerful would continue to work shoulder to shoulder with their own. They believed that the downfall of German imperialism meant an end to human cootysism in the United States—a government of the people, by the people, for the people.

How many times did I see the light that never was on sea or land shining in the eyes of a tenement mother as she told me of her son sleeping under the poppies in France.

"It ain't as if he didn't have to go some time. We all has to," she would tell me, with swimming eyes as her work-gnarled fingers twisted her gingham apron. "He couldn't have gone a better way—for his country. He said that 'imself, when he was leavin'. 'Mother,' he says to me the last time he was home from camp, 'mother, I wants you to promise that you won't grieve none if—if I goes West. We all has to go some time, and a fellow couldn't go a better

way than for his country. I wants you to promise me, mother.'"

I believe two of the happiest persons I ever met were an old Jew and his wife. Going through a tenement, a decently kept house, I was directed by the janitor to a flat, second floor front, east, as containing the only dog in her house without a license. A tousle-haired woman with a dirty face and grouch opened the door.

"Naw, I ain't got no dog," she said, and she tried to shut the door in my face. Being warned by the janitor I had put the toe of my shoe in.

"What do you call that behind you?—a horse?" I asked, as a yellow-and-white mutt, almost as ill conditioned as the woman, jumped down from the bed in the alcove and stood at her heels.

"Git out from here," she railed at the dog as she aimed a kick at it with a foot incased in an unlaced run-down shoe, without a stocking. "'Tain't mine. I wouldn't tell you no lie. I'm too much of a lady to lie about a dog. It belongs to my son; he brought the mutt home from camp before they sent 'im away. I'm just keeping it for 'im."

"Is your son in France?" I asked, for at that time having a soldier in the family was the touch that made the whole world kin.

She shook her head. "They've sent 'im to another trainin'-camp down South." Then recognizing the note of sympathy in my voice, she threw open the door and invited me in.

It was the dirtiest flat in a decently kept tenement-house that I had ever entered. There was plenty of substantial furniture—chairs, a round oak dining-table, a good deal table, and an abundance of cooking utensils and crockery. Dirt! The floor was strewn with newspapers, crusts of bread, potato-peel, dirt, and more dirt.

"Seems like they oughtn't to make me pay license for my son's dog an' him a soldier?"

"That's a nice dining-table," I parried, for in spite of her dirt if her son was her sole support I was willing to give her time to take out a dog license.

Being Irish, at the mention of her table she began to boast. That was not to be compared to the one in her front room. The furniture in her front room was something grand. All the furniture in her flat was of the best, she never having been a believer in "cheap John stuff." She'd like to show me her front room if it wasn't that Dan'l, her husband, was such a one for throwing things around.

On my asking if her soldier son were her only child, I learned that she had one other living, a boy of twelve. Her husband "worked for the city," got thirty dollars a week. But what was that to support a family on. Seemed like a rich city like New York oughter be able to pay better wages. Also it seemed like the government oughter pay more to the family of soldiers, to make up for taking them away. Her son, besides making good money as a plumber, was "in politics" for weeks before and during elections; he more than doubled his wages by working evenings.

As I was taking my leave she had the grace to apologize for her "things bein' strewed around." She used to take pleasure in her flat, she assured me, but now that the house had run down so there was no use wearing herself out trying to keep things up.

"What caused the house to go down so?" I inquired, glancing around the well-swept hall and stairs.

"Jews," she replied, indicating the flat above her own. "I done let the janitor know what I think of her, takin' dirty Jews in the house with decent Christians."

Because of Eleanor I have a soft spot in my heart for Jews. Eleanor was my desk-mate during my first two

years in the high school. She was a few years older than I, indeed I looked upon her as quite a young lady; but I thought then, and I never have changed my mind, that she was one of the loveliest and most beautiful girls I have ever known. No one could object to living in the house with Eleanor.

Once when living in a New York hotel I had seen three persons, unmistakably gentle people, turned away—told there were no rooms. After they left, the room-clerk smirkingly remarked on the gall of "such people," thinking they'd slip in, when they knew that hotel never took Jews. The Sea Foam, I was told by the head waiter, would let every room stand empty before taking in Jews.

Recalling all this I determined to see the Jew whose coming had caused this tenement-house to deteriorate so hopelessly that a dirty-faced Irishwoman should lose heart and ambition. Though the janitor had told me that the dog on the third floor had a license, I climbed the stairs.

The man who opened the door might have stepped from the pages of an old illustrated Bible. He was small, old, and slightly bent. He had a long gray beard, wore a black skull-cap, and heavy horn-rimmed spectacles rested on the bridge of his long hooked nose. The dressing-gown which he wore over his coat had a purple lining.

On learning my business he invited me in—oh, I must come in and see their dog, their grandson's dog. The flat contained three rooms, an alcove, and a tiny hall. In the front room, at the end of the tiny hall, I found the old man's mate, and like him she might have stepped fresh from the pages of an ancient Bible.

She also wore her dressing-gown, more gaudily colored than her husband's, over her clothes. It was a chilly day, and unlike the Irishwoman, who had a coal-fire roaring in her stove, they had no heat excepting the sun shining in at their two front windows.



On a table at the old woman's elbow sat a glass decanter about half full of purple wine, two wine-glasses, and a plate of unusual-appearing small cakes. Knowing it to be a Jewish holiday I fancied that I had interrupted some religious rite, and was for beating a hasty retreat. No, no, I must stay.

It was for their grandson. A stranger coming into their home so opportunely and joining them would insure a blessing on their house. Surely I wouldn't refuse to join them in drinking to the health of their grandson, an American soldier somewhere in France.

Then it all came out, the reason for their little celebration. They had that morning been notified by the government that their grandson had been cited for bravery. Yes, he had been wounded in battle.

Then there was a short silence and I guessed the thought, the fear, that crossed their minds. It was not for long; they pushed it aside. It was for his country, America.

While sipping their grape-juice and dividing my seed-cake with the black-and-tan dog, the excuse for my visit, I learned bit by bit that this grandson was all they had. Ever since the accident through which the old man lost the sight of one eye this young man had been practically their sole support.

On my suggesting that they must miss his wages, both husband and wife quickly dissented. No, they had the government's allotment. Besides,—the old woman glanced at the alcove in which I saw a narrow bed piled high with feather mattresses and pillows,—she kept a boarder. Yes, it was her grandson's room, and the boarder was her grandson's friend—a good young man, though not strong and handsome like the soldier who had been cited for bravery.

Unwillingly they admitted that there had been a time, just at first, when Uncle Sam was not so prompt as they had hoped he would be. Their allotment was late. Yes,

it was more than a month, but what could you expect with so many soldiers on the pay-roll! The old grandmother had applied to the Red Cross. Since then they had had no trouble.

That was the key to the situation in the tenements during the war—the Red Cross. But for the Red Cross millions might have suffered, and perhaps thousands actually starved. While Uncle Sam was occupied with getting his fighting machine ready for action, the Red Cross stepped into the breach and saw to it that the families of his fighting men did not suffer.

A dozen times a day, during the war and after peace was declared, I entered homes that had been kept together by the Red Cross. It is the one philanthropic organization against which I heard no complaint, not one.

Strange as it may seem, the one human being against whom I never heard a word of censure was President Wilson. In spite of the abuse heaped on him by the newspapers, and the continued faultfinding of their richer fellow citizens, I never heard a tenement woman mention President Wilson's name, or refer to him, except in praise and gratitude. His pictures in the tenements were almost as numerous as those of the Virgin Mary.

To the tenement woman President Wilson was the man who won the war, brought their sons back home, and stood for a continuation of Democratic conditions as existing during the war. Hundreds of tenement women gave me three reasons why they wished Mr. McAdoo in the White House.

The first was always because he was the President's son-in-law—as Mr. Wilson couldn't have a third term they thought "they" ought to send his daughter's husband. Their two other reasons were: he had started the raise in wages, and had been the means of lowering the price of coal.

After the nominations, when my talk with tenement women turned to politics, I used to ask for an opinion of the nominees. Speaking of the man chosen by the Democrats they would reply:

“Seems like they might’ve done better’n get a man who’d divorced the mother of his children. Don’t look right to me.”

Political parties, take notice! The tenement woman has a vote.

## CHAPTER XX

### A PEST-HOUSE?

IN a preceding chapter I stated my conviction that in the district I covered as inspector of dog licenses there were representatives from every nationality on the globe. Now there are a considerable number of nationalities on the globe. Start to count and one will find the fingers of both hands used up hardly before the enumeration is well begun.

In spite of the self-evidence of this fact, persons proclaiming themselves as interested in "our immigration problem" are continually asking me:

"What do *you* think about our immigration problem? You've lived in the tenements and seen things first-hand. *Which* nationality do you think we should let in, and which shut out?" They speak so eagerly, are so confident of my ability to answer intelligently such simple questions.

Simple questions! Though I consider my district a fair slice of New York, I know that New York now contains only a small portion of the foreign riffraff that has been deluging the country for the past forty years. As I saw conditions in the slums of New York, the United States has no immigration problem.

Its immigration problem ceased to exist twenty years ago—it became an emergency. It is all very well to talk about the United States as an asylum for the oppressed peoples of the earth. That is a beautiful thought. But the asylum that admits every applicant, regardless of his or her mental or physical condition, soon becomes a pest-house.

Pest-house is what our country is rapidly becoming. Indeed I am not entirely sure that it does not already deserve that name. If it does not, at least it is so infested with the germs of virulent diseases that its doors should be closed until every suspected inmate is thoroughly fumigated. And that operation will consume several years.

The evening before leaving New York, while at dinner in the Woman's City Club, I talked over the subject with a woman lawyer.

"You wouldn't even let in the relatives of those immigrants already in this country?" she questioned disapprovingly.

"I would not," I replied, and my tone was emphatic.

"Well, I don't see just how you could do that," she protested, and her disapproval had become near to indignation.

"Just three hows: I'm an American and believe in America first; I'm not a sentimentalist; I'm not an employer of cheap labor."

"But it's not sentimentality—allowing an immigrant to bring in his wife and children, or his mother and father," she assured me.

"Isn't it? How about a smallpox epidemic? I've been pretty near two or three. I never heard of an uninfested community begging that near relatives be allowed to pass through the quarantine for the sake of coming to them."

"But that's different—smallpox," she contradicted, as resting her elbows on the table she brought the tips of her perfectly manicured finger-nails together that she might admire them at her leisure. "You're an alarmist, my dear. I've been practising in New York for—for a good many years now. I'm sure if conditions were so bad I would have known about it before this."

In my diary I recorded the history of one hundred and thirty-seven children—cases investigated for Bellevue social

service department—every one of them the children of foreign parents—both parents. In only three cases the parents could not be classed as paupers.

Those three—one was a Finn, a printer; his wife died and he was ill with flu. So soon as he got on his feet he took his baby and offered to pay for what had been done for it. The second was an Italian bootblack, father of five children, whose wife died in Bellevue. He not only willingly assumed the responsibility of his children as soon as they were able to leave the hospital, but politely declined both financial assistance and advice from the social service department.

In the third case the father was a Spaniard and the mother an Italian. Their flat was practically stripped of every piece of salable furniture before they could be induced to allow themselves or any one of their children to be taken to Bellevue. On my first visit not one of them had a change of clothes. There was one bed, and two mattresses on the floor. Two ragged sheets, spotlessly clean, were all they had in the way of covers, though it was then the middle of a cold winter. There was a table, two chairs, a wood-stove, and about a half-dozen pieces of crockery—every one of these articles was broken. The pot and saucepan, though old, were whole.

The committee allowed me twenty-five dollars to spend for that family. Every penny of it went for household furnishings. Later, when I got my fingers on a few extra dollars, I called at the flat and offered to spend it for clothing. Courteously but firmly the mother told me that her husband had said they had taken enough; she must not accept any more help.

The parents of every one of those one hundred and thirty-seven children were defective, either mentally or physically, sometimes both. Even in the three non-pauper families, the bootblack was a cripple, the Finn tubercular, and the

Italian wife of the Spaniard had had both breasts removed because of cancer.

I did not record the histories of those cases because they were in any way unusual. They are a fair sample of the cases given to any and every social worker on the staff of a hospital where the patients come from the slums of New York City. Of all the cases I investigated—nearly three hundred—as a social worker, there was not one child of American parentage—all of them the children of immigrants.

For thirty days during the summer of 1920 I kept a record of the nationality of the families on whom I called in the capacity of license inspector. Of the one thousand and six families talked with, eighteen had both parents American. In twenty-one, one parent was American.

Be it understood that when a family claimed to be Irish-American I rated them as Irish. There were a lot of such scum in my district. To my way of thinking the propaganda carried on by such individuals is much more dangerous to American institutions and ideals than that spouted by the few I met who claimed to be Bolsheviki.

Some of the most dangerous persons met during my four years in the underbrush, to American ideals and institutions, had entered the country after the declaration of peace. Four of them were prostitutes of that class known as street-walkers, for the time being or until, as they expressed it:

“I meek von reech haul.”

The fifth, having already made a rich haul, chanced to be visiting her pals when I called. All of these women were attractive to look at, all claimed to have come to this country to join relatives, and all were preaching the downfall of constitutional government. They were here to get money, and they didn't care how they got it.

They all belonged to one of the oppressed peoples of the earth. They were all Poles, or claimed to be.

But I do not blame the immigrants, neither for coming nor for what they do after they get here. The present condition of the country is the fault of persons like myself—Americans born and bred, the descendants of the men and women who planted our colonies, fought and won the Revolution, and founded our government.

Proud in our own conceit, we have allowed the control of the country, handed over to our keeping by our fathers, to slip out of our hands. Like a pack of second-rate shopkeepers we have lost all initiative, and assuming an air of lofty indifference, pretend to be unconscious that the parvenu establishment across the street has taken all the trade that used to belong to us.

Why, there was a time when we got so exclusive, the whole pack of us, that we boasted:

“No gentleman will go into politics—such low associates.”

Then Theodore Roosevelt came. Being President of the United States became almost as aristocratic as tooling a coach or breeding dogs. And in a government of the people, by the people, for the people. To see the result of that un-American snobbishness one needs only to read a list of the men holding the highest political offices in our largest cities.

The descendants of the men and women who settled the country and founded the government are as scarce as hens' teeth.

It is also the fault of us original Americans that immigrants have not become Americanized more rapidly. How could any one, you or I, become familiar with the ideals and aims of a Bedouin Arab if we had never come in speaking distance with a Bedouin Arab, could neither speak nor read his language, and only caught a glimpse of him careening by on his camel?

Take the residential districts of New York City, for instance. As soon as an immigrant moves in, what is known



as "fashion" moves out. It is that habit of running hot-footed from the immigrant that was the beginning of New York slums. And not alone in New York, it's all over the country.

In the small city in which I am now writing, the most beautiful, the best-drained, and healthiest section is being deserted. Wonderful homes with orange and grape-fruit trees in full bearing are being given up, their owners moving to a newly settled and less desirable quarter. All because of "the Latins"—Cubans, Spaniards, French, and Italians.

"But what is the matter with the Latins?" I asked a woman who had complained to me that her husband had refused to break up his home and move to Hyde Park.

"Oh, they're disgusting," she assured me, her face as expressive as her words. "The women do all their own housework, and they have so many children."

Two great crimes—doing housework and having children.

Small wonder that the mother of George Washington lay for a hundred years in an unmarked grave before any one ever thought it worth while to write her life. She not only bore and brought up a houseful of sons and daughters, but she did housework—she ground and stuffed sausages for family consumption, and she wore an apron.

When told by a pompous courier that His Excellency the Commander-in-Chief of the American and French Armies was on his way to pay her a visit, she replied:

"Tell George I'll be glad to see him. Sukie, go bring me a clean apron."

Now we've gotten so snobbish, we the descendants of that sturdy old stock, that the sight of a woman next door wearing an apron makes us run away. Having run as far as possible, we turn around and find fault with that woman and her children for not imbibing American ideals.

It is our fault that in our country the immigration question has developed into an emergency—if from an asylum

for the oppressed peoples of the earth the United States has become a pest-house.

After stating that I consider stopping immigration at least for a term of years an urgent necessity to the health of our country, it may seem useless to answer the second of the two questions propounded at the beginning of this chapter. But I would like to write briefly of a few of the nationalities with whom I came in close contact during my four years in the underbrush.

Jews and Italians are very attractive when met in their homes. Among my fellow workers I often heard Jews spoken of as "dirty Tykes." Now I never succeeded in learning just what "Tyke" means. I never found any one who was sure about the spelling of the word. They would assure me that it meant a Jew, but why a Jew they could give no explanation.

So far as my observation went, the Jews of the tenements are not a dirty people, far from it. Some of the cleanest, best-kept homes that I entered were those of Jews—German Jews, Russian Jews, Polish Jews, and Jews the country of whose birth I never learned.

Never, in all my four years, did I receive a rude word, not even a rude glance, from a Jew. I never heard a Jewish man speak roughly to a woman or a child. I never had a Jew lie to me about having a dog, or claim a license when he had none.

In my work I met many Jews, some mere children, who seemed to me marvels of quick, straight thinking. At first this was a source of surprise—persons so humbly placed, having had so few advantages, could think and decide so wisely.

As a rule they met a crisis bravely, and I never knew one to flop over, a spineless, helpless, human jelly-fish. That is the supreme difference between the Jew and the other nationalities met in the tenements. For months that differ-

ence was the chiefest of my puzzles—why did the Jew always come up with his wits about him?

During the influenza epidemic I saw the remaining remnant of many families, on learning their condition, lose the power to think or plan for a future—fathers, with a lapful of young children, would become as helpless as the youngest of their brood, an older child left with one or more younger sisters or brothers. Even when they returned to work and were earning the money that supported their dependents, they needed and begged for the counsel and advice of the social worker.

It was never so with a Jew. Being a Jew means knowing how and attending to his own affairs. That is the way I came to look at it. And after months of observation and much thinking I found what I still believe to be the reason for that supreme difference.

The Jew has always thought for himself, acted for himself, depended on himself. So far as I could learn there is no book a Jew is forbidden to read, there is no thought he may not entertain. He has no one on whom to cast his burdens, he can gain absolution for his sins from no source. Whether he wins or loses is up to him, to his own character. He stands face to face with his God.

The Italians—my other favorite tenement-dwellers, for I became sincerely fond of many of them—are a laughter-loving, destructive race. Many of them are far from neat—coming from the slums of their own country and landing in the slums of New York, their standard of living is low.

Seen in their homes, among their family, they are charming. They meet their visitors on that visitor's ground. However gruff was my reception, once I spoke, explained my visit, my reception was invariably cordial. However dirty and disordered her flat, however many children might be holding her skirts or squirming over the floor, the Italian woman would always insist on my coming in.

Even though she could not speak a word of American, she would throw open her door and try, bowing and waving, to induce me to enter. Often I did enter, waiting for some one, a neighbor or a child, to act as interpreter. To prevent time from hanging heavy on my hands she would show me her family album, birth, marriage, or death certificates, or some other such treasures.

Unfortunately, the Italians as met in the tenements have too many mental or physical defects. I cannot recall ever talking with an Italian woman who did not mention some relative in some philanthropic institution. Having always been poor, they struggle out of poverty as they can; but when they do not succeed they accept their condition gracefully.

To the Italian, poverty does not possess a sting. I believe it stings a Jew—being poor.

During the congestion in the tenements I got my best views of the national characteristics of the various peoples among whom I worked. Though a horribly uncomfortable period for the tenement-dweller, it was intensely interesting to me. It was as though after hearing a piece of music correctly played you again listened to it with both pedals down.

## CHAPTER XXI

### FORCING THE GOOSE TO LAY MORE DOLLARS

"TWELVE persons and two dogs living in three small rooms, and one of those a dark kitchen. How packed with sound—humanity and sound!" That is, provided greed be an inalienable attribute of humanity.

It was greed, and greed alone, that forced those twelve persons and two dogs to live in such well-nigh insupportable conditions. The story as told me was like this:

At the time that Congress declared that a state of war existed between this country and Germany, Mr. and Mrs. Arthur Bruno, both American born, and their four children, lived in the flat in which I afterward found them. At that time their flat consisted of a dark kitchen, a front room with two windows looking on Second Avenue, and two twilight bedrooms, each with a window looking on a by-courtesy court no wider than a well.

One of these twilight bedrooms was occupied by Mr. and Mrs. Bruno, the other by their grown daughter and her schoolgirl sister. The two sons, one at work and the other at school, slept on a couch-bed in the front room.

"We was thinking about getting a flat with more room," Mrs. Bruno explained to me. "Both my boy and girl was making good wages. When I told them I'd found a place, they both told me they was thinking of marryin'. No use movin' and havin' an extra room on your hands when your boy and girl marry."

Both did marry and both young husbands enlisted. As a consequence when they were called to camp both young wives came to live with Mr. and Mrs. Bruno. In time both young wives gave birth to a baby.

All went well until the owner of the flat-house deter-

mined to get higher rents. Five dollars a month was the raise charged the Bruno family. Though the old man grumbled he paid the raise.

Two months later he received notice of a ten-dollar-a-month raise—the cost of living was so high, the owner explained, that she had to have more money. A few months more and yet another raise. This notice was served just after the birth of one baby and before the birth of the other. With one young woman just home from the hospital and the other expecting to go any day, the family was in no condition to move.

With Mr. Bruno the only worker in the family, for the allotment due each of the young wives had not been paid, ten dollars more rent meant starvation. The two children, boy and girl, were taken out of school and put to work. Their wages made up the needed ten dollars a month and gave something over to meet the rise in the cost of all the necessities of life.

Shortly after the birth of the second baby the tenement-owner made a tour of inspection, looked over her property. As described by the occupants of her tenement she was a large, "fleshy" lady. All agreed that her clothes, furs, diamonds, and automobile were "grand." As an additional evidence of her grandeur, besides her chauffeur there was seated another grown man in uniform, whose only duty, so far as the women and children living in her tenement could understand, was to hop out when the automobile stopped and hold open the door.

When collecting the next rent the agent of this property-owner informed each tenement that at a certain time the house was to be repaired and the flats made over. Six flats were to be made on each floor where before there had been four. Each flat was to be sharer of one dark room, so that the new flats were to contain two rooms each, a kitchen and bedroom.

On being questioned the agent declared that he had not been told anything about rent. But the tenants, convinced that by giving up a room they would lower their rent, submitted to the alterations.

When rent-day came the same amount was required of them. Those who objected were made to leave. Mrs. Bruno, before expressing her indignation, went out to find a flat into which to move her family. She told me that she looked for two weeks, paid car-fare, and almost wore a pair of good shoes out without finding anything better, or so good.

“Father got an offer of night-work—it wasn’t easy for him, beginnin’ at his age—but the pay was better, and him sleepin’ days give us more room nights,” she said. Then with a shake of the head she added: “We thought rents had gone as high as they could go, seein’ that folks had begun to kick about ’em. Jesus! Less than three months the agent comes round again and serves another notice of a raise—we had to pay more’n double for these three rooms what we’d paid for four when we moved in.”

A few days after this raise in rent Lucretia, the daughter, learned that her husband had been killed somewhere in France. Work being plentiful she got a night job—pay was better and it left more room in the beds at night for those of the family employed during the day.

The cost of living continuing to soar, the son’s wife got a job to supplement the government allotment. Because of the higher pay she too took night-work. Within a short time she was back in the hospital, both she and her baby sick. The doctor forbade her working at night. Urged by her mother, Lucretia also got a day job.

At the end of the war the son came back, and Mrs. Bruno once more started out to look for a flat, a home for her son and his family. Until such a home was found it was deemed wisest for the son to go with his father, take

night-work. Just when the old woman gave up her search for a flat as a useless waste of time, her son's "buddie" came sailing into New York harbor with his French wife, soon to become a mother.

With true Italian hospitality young Bruno not only brought his "buddie" and his French wife home, but included their dog. The young Frenchwoman went to Bellevue, her husband found work, and Mrs. Bruno set out to find them a living place, anything in the way of a roof-tree from a cellar to a garret.

When I last called on the Bruno dog the hunt for a flat, a room, a cellar, was still being made. While Mrs. Bruno was doing her best to find a vacancy she told me that because of the money she would be sorry to have "buddie" and his little family go.

"It's the rent," she told me. "Everybody's workin' exceptin' me and Marie. She hasn't been out the hospital long, and there's her baby to feed. All gets good wages. Why, my youngest girl gets twenty a week. I'm as careful as I knows how, but the rent— She's chargin' us four times as much for these three rooms as we used to pay for four."

Any one who believes that tender-heartedness means woman, or that all women are tender of heart and conscience, had best never investigate the ownership of tenement-house property in the slums of New York City. The filthiest, most dilapidated tenement-houses I entered were the property of a woman, a human slug who, from the cradle to the grave, never did anything more than dress and eat.

"I don't know what this city's coming to," she once said to me as she waved an opened letter. "Here's the Health Department ordering me to put toilets in my houses. Why, I scarcely get enough to live on from those houses as it is."

"You live at an expensive hotel and dress rather ex-



pensively," I suggested. "If, when you go off this summer——"

"I won't do anything of the sort. Why should I sacrifice myself to provide a lot of filthy foreigners with luxuries. Besides, they don't want them," she asserted positively. "They've never been accustomed to such conveniences; they'd as soon go in the yard."

"Ever ask them?" I inquired. She was old enough to be my grandmother, so I didn't wish to hurt her feelings, though I did long to get her to look at the matter from the tenant's point of view. "How long since you've gone through those houses, seen the condition with your own eyes? How long?"

"Not since mother's death. We used to live in the front house, you know. East Third Street was fashionable then." She gave a list of neighbors and friends who had owned homes within a few blocks of her property, most of them names prominent in the history of the city. "Mother and I used to live on those houses, had money to do as we pleased. Now they order me to put in toilets. I'll do no such thing—unless they force me to."

She was forced to. After getting estimates from several contractors she finally got a bid which she considered "reasonable." Acting against the advice of her renting-agent, she accepted this bid. The man did the work, she paid his bill, and a few weeks later was notified that all the toilets had dropped through the floor. One of them in falling struck one of the tenants, who threatened a suit for damages.

That is the first cause of the slums of New York City—property-owners like that woman.

In my district as inspector of dog licenses I met with one tenement-owner who did not increase his rent during the housing crisis in New York. He owned ten or more houses of six or ten flats each in the lower part of my district, and

between First Avenue and the river. They were so much better kept than the property surrounding them that the instant I put my foot in the door I recognized them as belonging to this man.

The last time I called on the dogs in those houses I was assured by the janitor and the tenants that they had not had a raise in rent for more than ten years. In several of this man's houses tenants and janitors told me there hadn't been a change in more than twenty years. One janitor who had cared for one of his houses for thirty years said she hadn't had as many as a dozen new tenants in all that time.

Though I tried several times to see this house-owner for the sake of asking him how he managed to make money when every other real-estate owner was piling on rent, I never got any nearer him than his sister, who lives with him. This woman assured me that her brother did make his tenement property pay, pay well.

Her brother had found, she told me, that keeping his houses in good repair, and under the care of a courteous, clean janitor, insured his keeping respectable tenants. By respectable, she explained, her brother meant persons who held down their jobs, paid their rent promptly, and did not make a business of destroying the property. He took in any nationality so long as they were the right sort of persons.

The enormous increase of crime, the so-called "crime wave," was brought about by congestion in the tenement districts more than by any other one cause. Children and young people, being forced out of their homes by overcrowding, spent their evenings on the streets, or in any public place open to an empty pocketbook.

It was impossible for parents to keep track of their children, boys or girls, once the child got large enough to go around alone. Often this was a relief to the mother of the

family, especially when her brood did not get on harmoniously.

"I'm glad to see 'em go," one tenement mother confided to me. "Yet I can't tell youse how anxious I am until I gits 'em back. There ain't no room for 'em here, scrappin' and all but fightin' like they does; but once they're out of my sight I dunno who'll git 'old of 'em, or where they'll go."

In the upper part of my district I crossed the trail of at least a dozen different bands of juvenile thieves. One band when it first came to my notice was made up of two girls, neither of them fourteen years old, and both daughters of respectable, hard-working parents.

These two children began by playing hooky from school, climbing fire-escapes, and taking small articles from flats where the windows had been carelessly left unfastened. Growing bolder, they would strip a flat and lug the contents, bedding, clothing, and small articles, across the roofs to a different street, thence to a corner in a cellar which they had found temporarily unused.

Both of these children were noticeably good-looking, and the day I met them carefully and comfortably dressed. It was in a tenement-house in which the janitor lived on the top floor. Being a bit out of breath after climbing five flights of steep stairs, I halted in the passageway before knocking at the door of the janitor's flat.

As I stood there the door leading to the roof opened, and two girls entered, each with a bundle wrapped in a sheet. The house was profoundly quiet, and they were more than half-way down the stairs before they saw me.

"Our mother sent us to carry home this wash," one of them said to me, and she indicated the bundles.

"What were you doing on the roof?" I asked, more puzzled by her explanation than I had been by their appearance.

"We live on the top floor," she replied, and without the

slightest hesitation. "It's easier than going down so many stairs."

"H'm!" the older girl sniffed. "Who likes to carry bundles like these through the street? Folks laugh at us."

Stepping aside I let them pass. Then as I watched them make that flight I called down to them:

"Tell your mother next time not to make your bundles so heavy. Let you make two turns. Neither of you are strong enough for that load."

The janitor proved to be an old acquaintance—this being my third or fourth call on the dogs in her house. She was a gossipy Italian woman, and since she last saw me many things of importance to her had happened. She insisted on my coming in and sitting down.

After inspecting her new baby and admiring the photograph of her brother in an Italian uniform, among other subjects I chanced to mention was the hope that she would not allow her little girls to tote huge bundles of wash across roofs. I then told of the two children who had passed me in the hall.

"Jesus!" she exclaimed excitedly. "They break in Angelina's flat last week and stole all her fine clothes. Day before they break in a flat on the avenue and steal a man's watch."

The story in a nutshell was that the two children had, within six days, entered and robbed two flats. When I saw them they were evidently escaping with plunder from a third.

"I tell my man," the janitor added, after giving me the details of the two robberies, "he must get my dog license. My dog more use than the police. What the police do for me?—way down on the street—my dog he stay here. When I go I tell him: 'You stay.' Nobody come in when my dog's here."

Later I heard of these two girl robbers at least a dozen times. According to later reports they had annexed, or

been annexed by, two young men. One report was to the effect that the parents of one of them had taken the matter up with the police in the hope of finding their child and inducing her to return home.

In some of the best built and cared for tenement-houses in that section of my district, there was not a door that had not been jimmed. Janitor and tenants agreed that most of this was done by boys, scarcely more than children. They also agreed that a dog was the best and only protection against these thieves.

Crossing the back yard on my way to a rear tenement in the lower gas-house district, I once noticed a lot of writing on a fence. It was in chalk, and had the appearance of being freshly done.

"Mary will go too" and "Seen you was" were two sentences that attracted my attention.

While waiting for my knock at the door of the rear tenement to be answered, I saw a young man, a lad, saunter into the yard, read the writing, and then hurry out. As I was leaving, having seen the dog's license, another boy sauntered in, read the writing, and hurried out.

The dog-owner, on catching sight of the second boy as he entered, drew back and out of his sight. When I asked for an explanation, she assured me that the writing was the work of a gang of young crooks. She said everybody in the two houses knew about their writing signals on that fence, but dare not interfere. When I proposed to rub off the writing, she became alarmed and implored me not to touch it, not to walk on that side of the yard, or show that I saw it.

Not being a very gullible woman, I set about questioning janitors and dog-owners in that vicinity. According to these persons that gang was only one of many infesting that section. Several of them told me that she was in hourly dread of learning that her own son or daughter was a member of such a gang, and a criminal. Always the wail was:

"I can't keep track of 'em. We had to take a boarder in to help us pay rent. Evenin's there ain't room here for us all to set down, much less have company. Young folks must have company."

The persons responsible for these conditions, the tenement-owners, were ninety-nine out of every hundred well-to-do if not hugely rich. Their claim that it was the high cost of labor and materials that forced them to raise rents, in my district at least, was a lie.

During the last nine months of my service as inspector of dog licenses I made a point of asking in every tenement-house I entered, what repairs had been made during the past six months. According to my diary I found ninety-two houses where painting or repairs had been made at the expense of the landlord—ninety-two in the thousands, and tens of thousands, of tenement-houses in my district.

The vast majority of them not only made no repairs of any sort, but they cut down expenses. One nice little trick was to discharge a janitor to whom they had been paying a few dollars above the rent of her cellar or basement flat. After forcing her out or making her pay rent for her quarters, the agent would pick out a tenant, usually one with a small family, and notify the woman that she was to do the janitor's work, scrubbing, sweeping, and keeping track of tenants, and her husband must do the repairs. For this they would be allowed five or six dollars a month on their rent.

It was either do it or get out of the house. As there were no flats to be had, the man and wife had to do as they were bid.

In one case of this sort the price offered was six dollars a month taken off the rent, and the husband, a plumber, was not only to do all repairs in the house, but was to furnish his own material.

## CHAPTER XXII

### WOLVES AS SOCIAL LEADERS

BECAUSE I found social service work unsuited to my talent does not mean that I think such work unnecessary, or that I in any way disapprove of it. Quite the contrary. While I deeply deplore the condition that makes such work necessary, the condition exists, and should be met so long as it does exist.

Social service workers are as necessary in the slums of New York City as doctors and nurses in a pest-house. As I saw conditions, the social service worker should always be a graduate nurse, a mature woman of wide experience. Often she has the duties and obligations of a physician thrust on her. Now, I make the above statement because of my experience.

Had I been a graduate nurse I would have been very much more valuable as a social service worker—though perhaps not so keen an observer of conditions. The efficient social service worker has to accept certain conditions as well-nigh unalterable. She is a human being—there is a limit to her strength, her power of endurance, her time, and also to the amount of money she has to spend.

She must devote her mind as well as her time to the case in hand. She cannot be running off at a tangent, untangling the affairs of an entire tenement-house when her call is on one family—up in Harlem or under the Brooklyn Bridge there are always other sufferers awaiting her attention.

As an instance, take the rear tenement on East Twenty-seventh Street, where I found the floor of the street-level flat rotted away, and a pool of slimy, filthy water. The back hall, the floor of which still remained, or at least was

not entirely rotted away, had been used as a toilet—possibly by persons passing along the streets.

Entering that tenement, while looking for the janitor, I found a baby, less than two years old, playing in that filth. Of course it had smeared it over itself. It was horrible. Unspeakable!

A social service worker could have taken that baby to its mother and given her a lecture on hygiene. I did not stop at that—while standing by her to see that she gave the baby a proper scrubbing and clean clothes, I not only got the history of her and her family, but I held over her head the threat of the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children. Once the baby was decently clean, I put the mother on probation under the surveillance of the only dog-owner in the house—there was no janitor.

At noon I spent practically the whole of my lunch-hour telephoning the Tenement House Department and the owner of the house. To both I described myself as a writer, and told them that unless they wished to see a photograph of that street-level flat, with a description of that baby as I had found it, in the Sunday papers, that floor must be fixed and the house cleaned up at once.

As for that mother—I kept my hold on her for more than a year. Looking back over my records I find that I had, first and last, eighteen mothers in my district on such a probation. One was an Irishwoman living in a filthy tenement across from the morgue. She knocked a child down in my presence—a little emaciated boy of not more than six years.

When I remonstrated with her she told me that it was her child, and she would treat it as she chose. When I started for a policeman she changed her mind—began to slobber and shed crocodile tears while protesting her love for the child. As long as I was working within walking distance, I used to go once a week to see that she lived up



to her agreement. At first I used to make her strip the boy to make sure there were no bruises on his body. Later I called once a month—never at the same hour nor on the same day of the week.

One odd characteristic about those women, they always grew to like me. Among my best friends in the tenements I number several women whom I, at one time or another during my four years in the underbrush, threatened to report to the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children. That society, like the A. S. P. C. A., is known to every dweller in the slums of the Greater City.

There were occasions when I did not stop at a threat. I went to the nearest telephone and, calling up the society, reported the case. In every instance my appeal was attended to immediately, and handled to my satisfaction. The first time I had occasion to call on this organization was in behalf of four young girls, sisters.

They were as beautiful children as I have ever seen in the same family. It was because I remarked their surprising good looks that the janitor of the house in which they lived, and in whose rooms I found them, begged my protection for them.

She, that janitor, was tubercular, and ready, dressed, and waiting for the ambulance to come and take her to Bellevue. Looking for dogs I called at her flat. On learning her condition I expressed my sympathy, then added:

“Yet how fortunate you are to have four such lovely daughters.”

“I would to God they were mine,” she replied, and both her voice and the expression with which she looked at the children attested her sincerity. “Mary, take the children into the kitchen. I wanter speak to the lady.”

Mary took the children into the kitchen, and the janitor told me their story.

Their father was a Swede and their mother an Irish-

woman. About a year before I met with the children their father, a skilled machinist, had been killed in the shop where he worked. Because of this accident his wife received seventy-five dollars a month.

According to the janitor's story, which was verified by three tenants in the house, every month as soon as this woman received her check she went on a drunk. Not satisfied with drinking, she would bring strange men to her flat—men as drunk and degraded as herself. On such occasions the children had taken refuge with the janitor.

The night before my visit this woman had returned, after an absence of several days, with two men. Finding her eldest daughter, under thirteen years of age, in their flat, she refused to allow her to leave, ordered her to spend the night with one of the drunken men. The child had escaped from the room in which her mother had locked her with the drunken man by the fire-escape.

"I'd die happy if I only knew somebody would look after those little girls, see that they come to no harm," the janitor added, after telling me their story.

This was during my first summer working in the tenements. How hot the sun was that day! The cars on Twenty-third Street were not running, because of a blockade. I did not know that there were such long blocks in New York as those between First and Fourth Avenues seemed that day.

The ambulance from Bellevue might come for that janitor at any minute. With her gone those little girls would be at the mercy of their drunken mother and her beastly companions. Those three blocks seemed miles long. And the sun! I was dripping with perspiration when I entered the offices of the Prevention of Cruelty to Children.

It was Saturday and they were short-handed, the man in charge explained, both of which facts I knew to be true. If it could go over until Monday or later in the day. Plant-

ing myself in front of his desk, I stuck to my point. It was an urgent case, it must be attended to at once.

He promised to do the best he could, and I left him trying to locate his workers, to send them to the address. Back at the tenement, the cars were still standing motionless in the middle of Twenty-third Street—I found that the ambulance had not arrived. That gave me an idea—I would appeal to Miss Wadley.

It was not a case for a hospital social service, I knew that. But I realized that as a big stick the social service department of Bellevue had considerable weight. Though I did not know that it would be needed to make the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children function promptly, I was determined to be on the safe side. I was not taking chances with those girls and their drunken mother.

For a wonder Miss Wadley was out. The worker in charge of the office, the only one who had not finished her work for that day, consented to do all in her power. We had never seen each other before, but she took my word for it, and telephoned urging the children's society to prompt action.

At one o'clock the wagon of the society stopped before the tenement, and two agents went in. There was no need for me to follow them. The ambulance from Bellevue had not come, so the janitor was there to report conditions.

One of the hideous features of that case was that the mother, that woman who had become no better than a beast, belonged to a respectable family—all of them, excepting her, persons of refinement and education.

Another case that I reported to the children's society was that of a man who was breeding dogs in the presence of children. As soon as I struck the block I was told about the man, a Polack, who was "shaming" the neighborhood. When I said I would investigate the matter several women

begged me not to go near this man, or the houses of which he was the janitor.

I went and I met a dog whose eyes were on a level with my own. It was with this huge animal that he had terrorized the women and children on the block. When he called the dog out he expected to see me beat a hasty retreat.

He did not know what I had learned about myself, or rather about my clothes—they had become so permeated with the scent of dogs that the animals always sniffed me over and then proceeded to treat me as a long-lost friend. This tall black-and-white giant of a dog rubbed his muzzle against my shoulder, then taking his seat at my side, snuggled his head under my hand.

The man was impressed, but not sufficiently to cause him to change his mind. He had declared when I first entered his flat that he would not get a license for either of his three dogs, and he dared me or anybody in New York to try to make him. He was just one of the thousands and tens of thousands of blustering immigrants of low mentality that come into our country every day. He was a huge brute himself and imagined he could cow everybody with whom he came in contact.

On finding the nearest telephone I reported him to the children's society for indecency in the presence of children. Then I reported the filthy condition of his flat to the Health Department, and on meeting a policeman farther along the block I told him of the whole performance. Having been a member of the Woman's Police Reserve about a year, I had learned when to appeal to a brother cop.

The next morning as I passed along that block it seemed to me that everybody in sight wore a broad grin. Their enemy had been routed. The Health Department made him clean his flat, an agent of the children's society paid him a visit, and the officer on that beat had threatened to

take him to court if ever he caught his dogs on the street without a license tag and a muzzle.

The second largest dog in my district lived in a wine-cellar on East Twenty-ninth Street. A pencil scrawl came to me complaining that a dog at that address had no license. The writer of the scrawl demanded to know why an honest man like himself had to pay for a license while the crooks in the cellar did not. Needless to say the honest man forgot to sign his name.

It was late in the afternoon when I set out to investigate the wine-cellar. I had deciphered the name and number and was starting down the steps when, almost as if by magic, the pavement swarmed with gesticulating women and children.

An unusual feature of this writhing crowd was that no one made a sound. Not one word did they speak. But they made it plain that I was not to go down to that cellar.

"Why not?" I halted on the second step and demanded of a woman near me. "Why not?"

"Sicilians," she whispered, indicating the cellar. "Black Hand." And laying hold of my sleeve she tried to pull me back.

"I don't care a whoop," I told her. "I'm an American." And down the steps I went and into the wine-shop.

Having entered every saloon in my district I literally did not care a whoop about a place in which only wine was sold. It proved to be larger than I had expected—wide, deep, and so dark that the faces of the men seated at the farthest tables made me think of the flame of a lamp when seen through a chimney black with smoke.

So far as I could make out in one quick glance around there were a number of small, round tables at each of which were seated several men. All of these men appeared to be drinking, and many of them playing some game.

"Is there anybody here who can speak American?" I

demanded, as I came to a halt about two feet within the door.

Pandemonium! My entrance had not been noticed. At the sound of my voice it seemed to me that every man in the cellar sprang to his feet. Several chairs were overturned, and at least one table. In that moment I understood why Italians are called guineas. Those men sounded for all the world like a flock of guinea-hens when threatened by a hawk.

They swarmed about me gesticulating and potter-racking. It was so much like a scene in an Italian opera that I forgot to be afraid and became cross with them for appearing so stagy.

"Now, don't try to start any monkey black-hand business," I warned them crossly. "This is New York, and I'm in a hurry. Your dog's been complained about, and I've got to see its license."

"Oh, dog!" a voice at my elbow exclaimed, and there stepped from behind a curtain that I had not noticed a person whom I still believe to be the handsomest woman I have ever laid eyes on.

In that underground half-light she was superb. Nearly if not fully six feet tall, her figure reminded me of a perfectly proportioned pine sapling—as graceful and as natural. Her dress was of some black-gray filmy stuff that, falling in soft straight folds, accentuated her height and blended with the duskiess surrounding her. Her face was a long oval, her slumbrous eyes were as soft as black velvet, her nose slightly Roman, and her lips a delicately chiselled cupid's bow.

She ordered the men to stand back, and with a wave of her hand signalled to them to right the overturned table and chairs. Then drawing aside the dark curtain from behind which she had made her sudden appearance, she called the dog. It came bounding out, a great black beast, its head almost on a level with my shoulders.

It was then I noticed for the first time that I possessed an unusual attraction for dogs. This ferocious-looking animal, in spite of the orders of its mistress, insisted on sniffing me over. This ceremony finished, to the surprise of the woman and the men looking on, the dog rubbed against me and tried to lick my hand.

When I took my seat at a near-by table—the woman urged me to have a glass of wine with her—the dog stretched itself out beside me and rested its head on my knees.

“You must be good to dogs,” the most beautiful woman in New York City told me, speaking with a soft lisping accent, after she had tried in vain to coax the dog to return to its bed behind the curtain. “I never saw Dante do like that with a stranger.”

“Named for your great poet?” I questioned, for the sake of leading her thoughts into other channels. Though I had not at that time the remotest idea of what ailed the dog, I saw that its show of confidence pleased her and awed the men. I had no intention of acknowledging my ignorance.

“You read his poems!” she exclaimed, bending eagerly across the little table. What wonderful eyes she had! and teeth like evenly matched pearls.

Had I been a social service worker I could not have spent so much time sipping indifferent red wine and chattering about Italian poetry even with the most beautiful woman I ever saw. With Mr. Horton it was all right—I induced the woman to license her dog. It would take a brave, thrice brave social worker to report such an incident to her committee.

All social workers, so far as I was able to learn, are guided by a committee—the power behind the throne, or perhaps I might say the ball and chain attached to the foot of every social worker.

Of course no committee intentionally renders null and

void about fifty per cent of a worker's accomplishment. Neither do I imagine that a ball and chain intentionally trips up a convict at every other step. A ball and chain is insensate metal, it cannot learn. The members of the average committee supervising philanthropic work in New York City differ from a ball and chain in that they *will* not learn.

They know nothing about "those people," yet they never hesitate to advise the worker how to treat them, how much money to spend for them, and where. In no case must the spending of so much as a nickel be intrusted to "those people." That is one of the chief duties of a social worker, laying out the amount allowed by her committee on each specified case.

On one case I was allowed twenty-five dollars. After buying comfortables and several pieces of second-hand furniture there were a few dollars left over, less than five. I consulted with an experienced worker—might I not hand the amount to the mother of the family?

"My dear!" she exclaimed, her tone and manner as though I had suggested setting fire to the hospital. "You mustn't think of it. The committee would not like it. Think how good they were to give you twenty-five dollars for one family."

Not to give money is, I admit, an excellent general rule. But how about the worker's judgment and knowledge of conditions? In this instance the family were gentle people of good character. Besides the expense of maintaining eight children under fourteen, the father had paid for two long and expensive attacks on his wife—she had had both breasts removed because of cancer. Almost immediately after her second operation the family was stricken with influenza.

For the sake of spending those last few dollars judiciously I had to follow that educated, refined, and half-sick woman



around a shop—after she selected articles, cheap bits of crockery, knives and forks, I paid for them. There never was a sheep-killing dog that felt sneakier than I did when we left that store.

This is only one of many, many such instances that come to every social worker. What would have happened to my group of workers had we followed the advice of the committee woman who wanted every man out of a job, or who was working for low wages, sent to Hog Island, it is difficult to imagine.

At every meeting of that committee it was: "Why don't you send him to Hog Island?" "Isn't that a case for Hog Island?" or "He should go to Hog Island. I'm reliably informed that they are offering a dollar an hour and can't get enough men." I heard so much about Hog Island that I used to be afraid I'd get to grunting.

The majority, if not all, of the men that particular committee member wished shipped to Hog Island were the fathers of large families; several the only surviving parent. Everybody who knows anything about social work in New York City knows, or ought to know, that keeping a tenement father of a numerous family on his job is one of the chiefest problems of all philanthropic workers. He is only too willing to drop out of sight, get a young wife, and leave his old wife and her dozen or so children for the city to support. Ten to one such fathers are of the desirable citizens who come to us via Ellis Island.

What committee members refuse to learn is that "those people" are human beings, with hearts and sensibilities. They can love, and they can also hate, "even as you and I."

Now to compare a sympathetic gentlewoman, the bearer of a respectable name and the mistress of hundreds of thousands, perhaps millions, of dollars, to a thief, the robber of a poor-box, may seem an exaggeration. If so, it is in favor of the robber of the poor-box. He gets a few pennies,

a dime or so, and if caught is sent to prison as the most contemptible of thieves.

She saves two or three or five hundred dollars annually, directs how other persons' money is to be spent for the needy, and gains the praise and respect of a circle more extensive than her acquaintance. She neglects, forgets—call it what you will—her dues as a committee member.

If she were to do such a thing in any club in New York City she would be dropped from the list of members. She must pay her annual dues or get out. As a member of a committee dispensing the funds of a philanthropy she is pledged to pay a stipulated amount. That is the first condition on which she is selected.

I made a point of cultivating the acquaintance of persons handling the funds of five leading philanthropic organizations in New York City. All five of these persons assured me that if the members of their committees would pay their dues their organization would never have a shortage of funds. One of these women told me that she intended to give up her position because she was sick of working with such persons, devising ways and means of making up the deficit when there should be no deficit.

Yet these persons have the supreme effrontery to sit with a committee and dictate how money contributed by the public for the sick and needy shall be spent. If they possessed unusual experience or a name of value in drawing contributions they might be excused. So far as I could learn not one of this class of human cooties possessed either—just a colossal egoism and a contempt for “those people” by means of whose misfortune they seek to climb to social or professional prominence.

Stealing from the poor of the slums of New York City means in the summer sick men and women and little babies shut in stifling flats, drawing into their system with every breath the stench of sweltering weather, their suffering

and dying for lack of ice and fresh air. In the winter it means the old, the sick, the helpless starving and freezing to death for lack of food and a handful of coals.

During the war when philanthropic associations were popping up like mushrooms and hanging out their signs at every street-corner and in every vacant room, a means was found to protect the public and see to it that our fighting men got what was intended for them. The men and women who do not pay their dues as committee members of a philanthropic organization have no right to a voice in administering its funds. They are stealing from the poor and deceiving the public.

## CHAPTER XXIII

### LEADERS OF THE HERD

It was a cold, bleak morning during the November of 1920 that my work as inspector of dog licenses took me to an old tenement-house on a cross street between Avenue A and Exterior Street. On learning that the janitor lived two flights up, back, east, I climbed the stairs.

The janitor's eight-year-old daughter was in charge. She was a polite little girl and reminded me of a plant which, having struggled up in semidarkness, had gone to seed too early. She thought her mother would be back soon, she told me, and held the door open for me to enter. Then placing a chair near the cold kitchen-stove, she invited me to sit down.

On my eyes becoming accustomed to the duskiess I saw that there was something on the bed in a little closet of a room that opened into the kitchen over which the little girl was hovering. The child's anxiety was so evidently urgent that I instinctively left my seat and hastened to her assistance.

The something on the bed was a fragile little scrap of humanity about a year and a half old. I am not a trained nurse, but even I could tell that the spark of life in that frail body was fading rapidly away. Questioning the little girl I learned that she really did not know where her mother was. She had been left to mind the baby, and that was all she knew.

The filthy conditions of the flat of three small rooms would have made me know without seeing the little girl that its occupants were either Irish or Italians. A glance

at the child assured me that they were Irish. Knowing the besetting sin of that race, I jumped to the conclusion that the mother had gone out and got drunk.

There was no fire in the stove and no coal in the rusty tin bucket beside it. The little girl said neither she nor the baby had had any breakfast. It was so evident that the baby was dying, that I had to do something. I rushed to the door of the front flat on the same floor.

“Jesus!” cried the Italian woman who answered my knock, as soon as I explained my errand. “Ain’t she got back yet?”

Yes, the janitor had stopped at her door on her way out, more than an hour ago. She had said her baby was better, more quiet, had not fretted so much during the later part of the night. She was on her way to the grocery to get a bucket of milk for the baby and a little something for her own and her daughter’s breakfast.

However untidy an Italian woman might be I always found a heart in her bosom, and that her hands were ready to help. This one, while talking, jerked up a milk-pail and held it bottom upward over a cup. Not a drop. How greedy her children were! If only they had left a few swallows for her to heat and give the janitor’s baby. Then scooping up a panful of coals she hurried after me and into the janitor’s flat.

Turning the pan of coals over to the little girl, she followed me to the bedside. Crooning half under her breath she bent over the still little figure. At first it seemed almost gone, its breathing was so faint.

Throwing at me a swift glance of consternation, the woman turned on the little girl. She must get on her coat—the poor, half-frozen little mite was wearing the only coat she possessed—and run down to the grocery. While talking she snatched the pan of coals from the child’s hands and proceeded to gouge down into one of her stockings.

As the Italian woman drew a crumpled bill from her stocking the door of the flat opened, and in stepped the janitor. Her face was wreathed in smiles, and both hands concealed by the ends of her shawl. The Italian woman, extending her hand, demanded the milk.

The janitor, throwing aside her shawl, displayed a short fat candle. She had been to church, she explained complacently, had burned a candle and prayed to Saint Somebody—I did not write the name of the saint to whom she prayed in my diary—for her baby. Her baby would get well. Oh, yes, it would surely get well, for she had spent the balance of her money for another candle.

Then without so much as a glance at the dying child, she hurried into her front room, and having lit the candle, placed it before the gaily colored picture of another saint. While she was doing this the last breath fluttered away from her baby.

When the Italian woman told her, convinced her that the baby was dead, such shrieks! Shriek after shriek. She alarmed the entire house, and persons passing in the street stopped to ask the reason.

I know negroes by the hundreds. I have known and lived among them all my life. Of them all, hundreds, there was only one who would have done such a thing, pinned her faith to a burning candle. That one was an old, old negress. She used to try to hoodoo persons.

Once, about twenty years ago, under the steps of the ironing-room at home, we, my brother and I and the negro children about the yard, found a conjure-bag of her making. It contained the claw of a ground-mole, a few hairs, said to be off a dog's tail, two cow-peas, and a scrap of bacon rind.

How the negroes laughed at that old woman! Young and middle-aged they jeered her. They asked her what she thought she was going to do by such foolishness. Who did she think was afraid of her conjure-bag? When she

mumbled angrily back at them they only laughed the louder.

Odd how one will change. When I first went to work in the slums nothing impressed me so favorably as the education of Irish children. I used to see them on the streets, in the tenements, the little girls in white, with long white veils and flowers, and the little boys with a bow of bright ribbon on one arm, and a gay-colored picture-card. The faces of all of them so happy, so uplifted.

I do not recall a parade during which one or more of these newly confirmed children did not come to me for my congratulations. As a member of the Woman's Police Reserve I acted as usher for all the parades that took place on Saturday and on holidays. Besides directing a boy scout in the seating of persons, it was my duty to keep children from crowding into the street and running wild over the bleachers.

It was while doing this that little boys and girls used to take occasion to show me their cards—each one pointing out his or her name among those of the class printed on the inside. Some of them would read aloud their verses to me. All of them seemed supremely happy, so sure that in becoming connected with their church they had done something of which they had every right to feel proud. And I still fully agree with them in that attitude.

It so impressed me at the time that I wrote Doctor Percy Stickney Grant, rector of the Church of the Ascension of New York City, asking why Protestant children were not brought up in the same way?—why Protestant children were not taught to feel at home in their church building?—why they were never on such charmingly friendly terms with their minister as Roman Catholic children were with their priest?

I selected Doctor Grant because he seemed to me to be the only Protestant minister in the city of New York who

was even trying to understand conditions among the poor of the Greater City, to learn their point of view. I am not one of his parishioners. I do not even belong to the same denomination.

In his reply he gave me a reason, and I judge that he did not wholly agree with me as to the desirability of Protestant children being so trained. Now, after seeing to what this early training leads in the slums, while I do not think it as desirable as I once did, I still feel that all evangelical churches miss their greatest opportunity when they neglect children.

Among the many snarls in which I found myself was a memorable one brought about by my ignorance. While on the staff of the Bellevue social service I had occasion to call several times on the same family, watching the convalescence of three children, all of whom had had pneumonia following an attack of influenza.

The mother, an intelligent and neat Irishwoman, complained that she could not keep the medicine prescribed for one of these children. The youngest member of her family, a two-year-old baby, persisted in drinking it. She had scolded and punished the baby, but in spite of all she could do it had drained three bottles of the medicine. As it was a question of keeping it out of the reach of the baby and yet having it where the mother might easily lay her hands on it, I glanced around her two bare rooms.

"Here you are!" I exclaimed joyfully, and reaching a little above my head I removed a little plaster figure from a little shelf in the corner. "This is out of your baby's reach, and your saint can stand over here." So saying I stood the figure on a corner of a lower shelf.

That was a terrible mistake. The woman snatched the little figure and placed it back on the high shelf. No saint would ever forgive a person who moved it from a higher to a lower shrine—I think she said shrine. Her agitation was genuine.



I left her on her knees, telling her beads before that little unbeautiful figure of plaster. She was explaining to the saint that it was I, not she, who had committed the crime. She implored the saint not to curse her or her children for my deed. I'm not at all sure she didn't call me a devil. Another woman did, all because of a scapular.

I had learned about wearing scapulars, for a cousin of my mother married a descendant of Charles Carroll, of Carrollton, and I grew up with their children. Of course they all wore scapulars, so beautifully embroidered that I used to advise them to wear them outside their clothes. And while this growing up together was going on I went to school with Clarence Horton.

Clarence was a son of our nearest neighbor, and at school he was famous for two reasons—he wore a little bag of assafoetida around his neck and he ate goose-eggs, hard-boiled goose-eggs. Because of the goose-eggs nobody cared to trade lunch with Clarence, and because of the assafoetida nobody would sit with him. However we might be enjoying ourselves, when Clarence joined us we went elsewhere.

During my service as a social worker I called at the flat of a woman who had been a Bellevue patient. Her baby was sick and she had not had an opportunity to go out and get the medicine ordered by the doctor, because he had cautioned her against taking the baby out and letting it take more cold. I offered to hold the baby while she ran to the corner drug-store and got the medicine.

The child was feverish and very fretful. Soon after taking it on my lap I noticed that it was tugging at a dirty string around its neck. To the string I found attached what I took to be a dirty little bag. Instantly there flashed into my mind memories of Clarence and his bag of assafoetida. Snapping the string I dropped the whole arrangement into the coal-bucket.

When the mother returned I explained to her that tying disinfectants around a baby's neck really did not do any good. And I told her that I had taken it off the baby.

The woman was wild with terror. She snatched the baby from me; said I was a devil and her baby would surely die unless she could remove my "spell." Grabbling in the coal-bucket she fished out the scapular, and in spite of all I could say or do out she went—taking the baby to a church.

That broke me all up. Respect for the faith of others had been hammered into me from my infancy up. We were never allowed to go to a negro camp-meeting, because my father feared that we might laugh or do something, even innocently, that would hurt the feelings of the worshippers.

Besides, I was brought up to respect Roman Catholics just as I was all other denominations. My father was graduated from Georgetown University before he entered William and Mary. And my brother nearest my own age went to a Catholic school before entering college.

No one can truthfully accuse me of animus against the Catholic Church or against the Irish. Besides my Carroll cousins, some of the best friends I ever had were Catholics and natives of Ireland. It was a United States senator, the owner and publisher of a notable newspaper, who gave me my "start" as a writer. He was a native of Ireland and a Catholic. He was one of the most intelligent persons I have ever known, and the kindest of gentlemen.

It was because I had known these splendid persons, natives of Ireland, and had been brought up with such a profound respect for the Catholic Church that my awakening in the slums was so tardy and so violent. To-day the best explanation that I have been able to reason out is that the great organization that did so much to Christianize and civilize the human race has become like Lot's wife—

a pillar of salt looking eternally backward, salt that has lost its savor.

As I saw the Irish Catholic in the slums of New York there was no truth in them. They would tell me they had no dog with the animal in plain sight, usually lying under the stove. When I called their attention to it they would swear by some few of their multitude of saints that it had strayed in from the streets, and in the goodness of their hearts they had fed it and allowed it to stay and rest. When I proved by the janitor, other tenants in the house, and by the dog itself that they were lying, they were not embarrassed, not at all.

There was no use getting them to promise to come and take out a license. I soon learned that there was but one way, making them understand that unless that license was taken out within a stated time I would take them to court. Looking over my records I find that Spaniards, Italians, French, Bohemians, and even Polacks to whom I gave three months' time kept their word. At the time of my call the worker of the family was on a strike, had lost his job, or had sickness or some other misfortune that consumed his earnings. In such cases I asked them to name the date before which they could get their dog a license. There is not a delinquent among the races I have named on my books.

When I first started in I treated the Irish the same way, but they soon taught me that it was casting pearls before swine. All the rudeness, the only rudeness I met in tenements was from persons who boasted of being either Irish or Germans. The Germans soon got a change of heart. The last half of my four years in the tenements the French themselves were not more courteous. Rude or courteous, a German is always neat, in his home as well as in his person. It seems to me the longer I worked in the slums the more I discovered in the Irish to laugh at or deplore.

I write of them as Irish because they were continually assuring me: "I'm Irish. My father and mother were born in this country, and I was born here. But I'm Irish, me and my children, too."

The little music-teacher who lived in the room under mine in Miss O'Brien's Greenwich Village rooming-house explained to me the reason why the Irish have a contempt for Italians. I told her of having stopped in the Italian church on East Twelfth Street and having seen a Liberty-bond button attached to the garments of the Virgin and the Child.

"Did it mean that some worshipper had made an offering of two Liberty bonds?" I asked, and the idea seemed to me very beautiful—combining devotion and patriotism.

The little music-teacher tossed her head scornfully.

"We Irish Catholics have nothing to do with Italians," she informed me. "See how they allow the Pope to be treated. You wait and see how he'll be treated when he comes to live in Ireland."

"Do you think this Pope will do that?" I inquired, for the thought was not only new to me, but it seemed as improbable as moving St. Peter's itself.

"It will be done within five years, maybe within two," she asserted positively.

Though that little woman was the third generation born in the United States, she took it as an insult to be referred to as an American. And the threats she used to breathe against the Democratic Party. Until I met her I had fancied that all my fellow citizens with Irish blood in their veins were devoted Democrats. She strangled that belief.

She was something of a character, that young woman. She possessed considerable musical talent and the promise of a good voice. Her family, with much self-denial, had managed to send her to Rome in the hope of her becoming a singer in grand opera.

As time wore on the people in my district got to know me and talk more freely. I soon learned that the idea of the Pope in Ireland was not a figment of the music-teacher's imagination. I was told repeatedly that within a few years he would be moved to Ireland.

Soon after I went to live in the tenement on East Thirty-first Street I got an even greater surprise. One Saturday afternoon a small, quietly dressed woman appeared at the entrance of my little flat—the upper half of the door being open she stood on the piazza. She asked for a contribution to build a church, and explained that she was taking from five cents up.

Now I believe in the moral influence of a church building. Even though the minister may not be of much significance I have found that in nine cases out of ten having a church in a neighborhood lifts the tone. While working for the A. S. P. C. A. I seldom passed a church in the tenements without stepping in, even when I did not have time to sit down.

While I was getting my pocketbook the little woman at the door told me about the church for which she was begging. It was to be the grandest in the world, to cost more than a hundred million of dollars. It was to be located at Washington, D. C. Then she added:

“The Pope is coming over to dedicate it. When he comes he'll never go back.”

I handed her twenty-five cents and told her that I hoped she would see to it that I got a seat in case I was able to be present at the dedication. She thanked me for my contribution, but very wisely, I thought, refrained from promising me a seat. And I refrained from telling her that I was not a child of the Pope's.

After that many a time and oft I was assured that the Pope would come to live in the United States. For days after the smashing of the windows of the Union Club the

tenements boiled. The Irish were in transports of triumph. The United States was only a "Greater Ireland," and the Pope would surely come over here to live.

On my inquiring on which steamer the Pope had bought passage, the woman who had been giving me the glad tidings became affronted. She haughtily informed me that a battleship would be sent for him, with all our other battlecrafts, great and small, to protect him from the English.

"The English always have been jealous of us," I told her. "I know they will, to the last man and woman of them, swell up and bust with jealousy when we get the Pope over here."

"It'll serve 'em right," she agreed.

Miss Stafford once asked me about religions, other than Catholic, met with in the tenements. During my four years in the underbrush I saw and came to know many persons, men and women, whom I would describe as "God-fearing." They were loyal citizens and doing the best they could with their opportunities. None of them ever more than mentioned their church, none of them spoke to me of knowing or ever meeting their minister.

One of these was the woman who loved much, the woman whom Polly Preston had the good fortune to meet and come to know. Though I lived in the same tenement with her, talked with her day after day, I never heard her mention the name of her minister, or in any way got the idea that she so much as dreamed of his ever calling to see her.

I used to see the man who preached in the church that she attended—walking down Fifth Avenue exuding wealth and overeating.

So far as I saw in the slums of New York City the Protestant minister of the Gospel is as extinct as the dodo. There are preachers, at least one for every Protestant church. Protestants living in the tenements sicken and die, but they never dream of receiving a call or so much as a word of

inquiry from the well-fed individual under whose teachings they have sat of a Sunday.

During my four years in the underbrush I never saw or heard of a Protestant minister in the slums of New York City, nor in a hospital. There never was a day that I did not meet at least one Catholic priest. During the influenza epidemic they were everywhere, at all times, day and night. They ministered to the sick, offered comfort to the living, and buried the dead.

Many, many times while I was doing social work I had Catholic priests to go out of their way to assure me of their willingness to help, to tell me where I could locate them. They made no denominational distinction. Once when I was calling on a patient at the Presbyterian Hospital there chanced to be two priests in that ward of twelve beds. On their way out both stopped and spoke to me, and gave me their addresses.

Several times I had occasion to call on the services of a priest. The response was always immediate. I never had occasion to call on a Protestant minister, for the Protestant who finds himself or herself in the slums of New York City soon learns that they must die as they have lived, unattended by a spiritual adviser.

## CHAPTER XXIV

### THE GALL OF THE YOKE

"THE public be damned!" snarled a successful capitalist some forty or more years ago, a capitalist who himself had been one of the public.

For by the public he meant working people and all who are forced to travel with them. Other capitalists and near-capitalists, imagining that his expression was a formula in some way responsible for his ability to get money from the very class he cursed, adopted it as their business slogan.

As a slogan it enjoyed a long life. It even went into our politics. There are persons who claim that it was for the purpose of changing that habit of thought that Theodore Roosevelt formed the Progressive Party. Be that as it may, the working people, having changed it somewhat, adopted it for their own use.

"Capital be damned!" shouted the working people, and like the author of the slogan they forgot that they cursed the very thing that put bread and butter into their dinner-pails.

That was the condition when I entered the underbrush that November morning way back in 1916. The four most eventful years in the history of this world have passed since then. In no field has the change been so great as with the working people, working men and working women.

When I stepped out of the underbrush, during the last few months of my work and life in the tenements, that slogan had been scrapped, thrown into a waste-basket and forgotten.

"We must have our share" had taken its place with the working man and the working woman. "We will have our share."



“There ain’t no use of ’em telling us to look at Russia,” a boss carpenter told me about three months before I left New York City. “We are looking at Russia, looking at it close and constant. That’s the reason we workers in the United States is bound to win out. We see the mistakes made in Russia, and we’re going to avoid them.”

I glanced at his wife and saw that she was nodding her head in silent approval. Standing over the roasting-hot cook-stove she was serving her man and their five children their lunch, after having placed a plate for herself in compliment to a woman visitor. That visitor chanced to be myself, an inspector of dog licenses.

During the war, when good food was so hard to get in even high-priced restaurants, I formed the habit of taking my own lunch. In a little while I realized that this habit had another value besides that of insuring me pure, cleanly prepared food—it enabled me to accept invitations to meals with tenement-dwellers without embarrassment to them or myself.

The day to which I refer on entering their flat I found the family in the act of sitting down to their midday meal. This was not my first meal with the mother and school-children, though it was with the father of the family. Being at work on a building near his home he had come in to lunch.

“Do you think wages can remain at their present level?” I questioned.

He shook his head—his mouth being filled for the time being by boiled potato and roast beef.

“And I ain’t saying that we wanter keep ’em as high as they are,” he added, as soon as he could speak. “Things can’t go down as long as wages are as high as they are. We wants things to go down. It’s ridicklus the prices we has to pay for the things we eat and wear when we’re not at war. Food and clothes oughter be plentiful and cheap,

but that don't mean that wages has got to be what they was before the war."

"What does it mean?" I asked, and I realized that not only the mother but every one of the five children were listening.

"It means that we've got to have our share, that's what it means." Though his words were emphatic he was not the least bit rude, for my being a wage-earner insured my sympathy with his point of view. "I'm tired seeing my missus skimp and slave, and not have a second frock to her back, nor a second pair of shoes, like she done before the war. She's got glad rags now, not so many of 'em, but I'm going to see that she gets more. Well, she can't get more if the builder and contractor pockets all the profits while we workers hardly gets our salt."

"It ain't that so much—my having Sunday clothes," the mother put in, as, having helped herself to a boiled potato and gravy she took her seat. "It's the children. They're growing up and I wants they should have good food and a chance to get through school before they goes to work."

"Through high school, mum," the eldest girl corrected. "I want to be a teacher."

Another time I lunched with a family of which the father was a plumber and at table. It is an unusual occurrence, or was at that time, to find the man of the house at home in the middle of the day, except on Saturdays and Sundays.

"Yes, wages is coming down some, and I'm willing they should," he told me, looking over the rim of his saucer, from which he was drinking steaming-hot coffee. "What I ain't willing is they should cut from the bottom more than from the top. There ain't no sense in my boss paying me two dollars for doing work on which he collects twenty or more from a house-owner. 'Tain't a fair division, and none of us is going to stand for it."

Again the education of their children came up. There were four sons, and the eldest was attending the Stuyvesant High School with the intention of becoming an engineer. The mother explained that she was loath to allow the boy to enter for this additional training when he might have had his working papers and gotten a good job.

“What’s the use of us working if we can’t get better for our children than we had ourselves?” the husband cut in on her plaintive fears. “I always wanted to do something,” he explained to me. “I wanted to build houses. I’d got a bit handy with a saw and a hammer; they was all the tools I could borrow, when my father lost his job and I had to go to work. I had to take the best thing I could get—helper to a sort of half-way plumber. For a long time I used to think I’d change, but the chance never come my way. I’m bound my boy shall, though.”

“We’re for a minimum wage if they’ll make it high enough and cut the maximum low enough,” a young Jewess, an operator in a shirt-waist factory, told me one evening when chance brought us together in adjoining seats in the top gallery of a Broadway theatre.

“What do you mean by cutting the maximum low enough?” I questioned.

“The manager of our plant gets twenty-five thousand a year; I make around twenty-five a week, piece-work, you know; but some of the girls don’t get above twenty—can’t get up to my speed,” she explained. “T’other day the assistant manager let out a hint that wages was to be cut. ‘All right,’ I tells ’im, ‘cut, but begin where they begin to trim a tree—on the top. Just clip off a hundred a week from the manager, shave off fifty of yours, twenty-five of your assistants, and then I’ll let you take one off me.’”

“What did he say to that?” I asked, hoping that some hitch would occur to prevent the curtain from rising on time.

"Oh, he's a snitcher. He was getting something to carry his chief—feeling our pulse," she smiled back at me.

"You gave him something."

"Sure. I gave him an earful. Next week we're going to have a meeting at the house of the girl who lives nearest the shop. When the cut comes we'll be ready for them."

As the curtain went up I reached across and grasped her hand.

"Thank you," she whispered. "Maybe we'll meet at another show and I'll tell you about our fight."

The 1st of October, 1920, I gave up my position with the A. S. P. C. A. and applied for work in the Store Beautiful. This is reputed to be the largest and most beautiful department store in the world. I had been told that its employees came nearer receiving a square deal than in any other large shop in New York City.

As I had begun my four years in the underbrush by working in one department store, of which I have never been able to speak a good word, it seemed to me only fair that I should try another. Not being an investigator I wanted to make as good a report of conditions as I truthfully could.

I can truthfully say that conditions in the Store Beautiful are far, far ahead of what I had seen and known in the store where my experience began. Instead of one dollar a day I received seventeen a week, which, so far as I could find out, was at that time the minimum wage for a saleswoman.

The one and only fault that I have to find with Store Beautiful was put into words by one of the best and most highly esteemed salesman in the department with me. He had held his position for considerably more than ten years, and had many customers who would allow no one else to wait on them.

"They're pressing us pretty hard," this man remarked,

after reading a notice passed around among the salespeople of the department, telling them to report at a certain corner of the department after the store closed.

“What do you mean?” asked the floor-walker who had handed him the paper.

“I mean that they shouldn’t ask us to remain after hours—give our time free—when if we ask to get off early they charge us for it. This is the third time this week they’ve kept us. Our time’s worth something to us; these girls want to go home. I want to go; you want to go. They mustn’t press us too hard.”

During my six weeks’ service as a saleswoman in the toy department of the Store Beautiful I had some business to attend to, and asked to get off. My request was granted none too graciously. When my pay-envelope came I found that I had been docked one dollar and seventy-three cents. That was all right; I expected to pay for the time spent on my own business.

A week or so later the department was turned upside down, getting ready for the Christmas opening. Everybody came early and worked hard all day. When closing time came there was so much to be done that an appeal was made to the salespeople by the floor-walkers—they urged us to stay and help get our counters in order.

I remained until nearly midnight, and not having time to go to my little tenement flat, I was forced to get what supper I could in a Third Avenue eating-place. It was not much of a supper, but it cost me eighty cents. Counting up my time I found that I had remained, helped in the department, just exactly the length of time I had taken off. Naturally I expected to receive at least as much for my time as the management had docked from my wages—my work was done at night and the time taken from them was in the morning, when salespeople are least busy.

Seventy-five cents is what I received. Their time was

worth one dollar and seventy-three cents, mine seventy-five cents. Now that, as I see it, is the crux of the fight between labor and capital to-day. Capital wants so much more for itself, its own time, than it is willing to give labor for its time. Labor is sick and tired of that arrangement.

Next to the condition itself, the injustice of it, the chiefest reason for our social unrest to-day is Prohibition.

So long as workers could stupefy their senses with liquor there was a chance of staving off the day of reckoning with capital indefinitely. Liquor not only robbed the worker of his mental power and his will to do, but it consumed his earnings and left him too poor to fight to a finish. Liquor caused more strikers to throw up the sponge than all other reasons put together.

This is not an entirely original idea with me. I received the germ of the thought from one of four prostitutes at whose table I once ate my lunch. These young women were all Poles, immigrants who had come in soon after the end of the World War. They all spoke English sufficiently to be easily understood. If I could approach their accent I would try to give *verbatim* a part of my conversation with them. Unhappily that is beyond my power.

When I asked how they liked this country the prettiest of the four shook her head, the tallest one made a face, the shortest looked indifferent, and the stout one replied. She assured me that had they known that Prohibition would so soon become a law they would never have come to the United States. That was the reason they had left Russia. The Russians, most of them, had stopped drinking because they couldn't get liquor.

It was then that the tall girl vouchsafed that the Czar should have known better than to have stopped his soldiers drinking. He should have known, she insisted, that so soon as the people got sober enough to think they would kill him and put an end to their oppressors.

"It'll be just as bad over here in America," she added. "If working people don't have liquor to keep them half-soaked they blow things up."

Months before this conversation took place Miss Stafford had asked me what, if anything, could be done to stop the social unrest in our country.

"Why, yes, as I see it it might be done," I replied. "Burn all the public libraries and turn the country over to the Catholic Church."

Miss Stafford, being a Catholic, I knew this reply would tease her, cause her to dispute my assertion. Defending myself I felt sure we would hit on a more interesting subject of conversation. Furthermore, I knew that though she had been earning her living for years, practically ever since she reached maturity, she belonged to a class that steadily refuses to consider themselves as working people, a class that always takes side with capital.

For work has become so disgraceful in our country that no woman with any claims to being gently born cares to be classed with working people. That is one reason why there are so many childless married women, and discontented women, married and single. Nine cases out of ten the one and only aim of a girl is to marry as soon as possible—be she working girl or human cootie. And nine cases out of ten instead of trying to fit herself for intelligent wifehood and motherhood she only aims at catching a husband, a good husband if she can get him, but a husband she must have.

This eagerness to secure a provider is not caused primarily by laziness, but to remove the stigma of working for their living. Most women who do not marry have to work for a living. Working for her living in our country puts a woman on a lower plane.

An amusing evidence of this difference came to my attention while I was doing social service work. At com-

mittee meetings, when the members of various committees met to hear the reports of the social workers on the staff of the Bellevue social service department, the workers used to sit on one side of a long table and the committee members on the other. Under no circumstances must a worker attend one of these meetings with her hat on—only the members of the committee wore hats.

At one of these meetings when reporting a case I happened to refer to the committee as “you women.” The expression of consternation that sprang into the face of the individual obsessed by the possibilities of Hog Island! Realizing my mistake, I made a little bow, including all the members of the committee, and corrected myself by saying “you ladies.”

How the Hog Island “lady” beamed on me!

“My dear madam, if the good God made a lady he forgot to mention it,” was on the tip of my tongue. What might have happened had I put that statement into words is a matter of speculation, though I have always felt quite sure that I would not have kept that job another two months.

Yet those social workers were a picked group of women; every one refined and well-appearing; all of them women of unblemished character, as well educated as a majority of the women on the other side of the table, and with a few exceptions all graduated nurses. Because they worked for their living the committee members objected to being so much as mentioned in the same class—women.

“I don’t know but what I should marry,” the woman who loved much said to me one day. I was sitting on her door-sill in the Thirty-second Street tenement, with my feet on her little piazza. “My sister keeps after me to.” She paused; as I could not see her face I waited. “She never told me, but I know she don’t like having me at her house so much—not when she has company. She says it



shames her, having folks find out that she's got a sister working."

"Has she offered to support you?" I asked.

"Oh, no! She ain't able to do that. Her husband's well off, but not rich enough to help me much even if I'd let her. She thinks I should marry."

"How about the man?" I asked, trying to make my tone flippant, though I was far from feeling so. "Have you got one in sight?"

"Oh, yes." Her tone was a picture of dejection. After a pause she added, almost spitefully: "He riles me so. Every time he comes here I want to jump out the winder." Another pause. Then pensively: "He's a good man, though. 'Tain't his fault I don't fancy having him around. He's sober, never touches a drop, polite spoken, comes of a good family, and makes money. His wages are grand—eighty-two a week."

Still I held my peace though I knew that she was waiting for me to speak.

"I ain't like my sister; I never was. I don't mind work." I saw by her shadow that she glanced around her little flat, spotless in its neatness. "If it wasn't that folks look down on you for working, I'd like to keep my job till I die."

"Why don't you talk to the man as you have to me?" I asked.

"What for?" she cried, startled.

"Sifted down to fundamentals, marriage is a partnership, entered in for the purpose of founding and supporting a home and rearing children," I told her. "If you were to tell your manager that every time he came around you felt like jumping out the window, I think he would look elsewhere for a forewoman. You have been honest with yourself, I want you to be honest with the man who has asked you to go into partnership with him."

I've had girls by the dozen tell me:

"I'm a lady now. I'm married and don't work."

And I've heard dozens of my fellow workers remark on seeing a former working-mate:

"Ain't she lucky! She hadn't been workin' no time hardly before she married."

In no instance did the speaker mean that the woman referred to did not work at home—only that she did not work for wages. She might slave, do anything and everything at home, but so long as she did not work for wages she was in a higher class—a lady.

So besides demanding a larger share of capital accruing from their work, Labor is demanding that the stigma be taken off work. As I see it there is but one way to accomplish this—for every woman as well as every man to be, or to have been, a wage-earner.

## CHAPTER XXV

### THE END OF THE TRAIL

WORK of itself is not hard. It is the conditions under which most work is done that makes it a hardship. Work under good conditions is exhilarating.

There never was a time in all my four years in the underbrush that the work itself palled on me. It was the conditions under which I was forced to work that made it objectionable. One of my chief reasons for liking my work as an inspector of dog licenses was that I was a free agent, not bound by any hampering conditions. Each inspector was given his or her district, instructed as to their power and limitations under the law, and sent out to get results.

Never once did the manager of the A. S. P. C. A. tell me that I must do a given thing in a given way. The few times that I found myself facing a problem about the handling of which I was in doubt, when I appealed to him he gave me advice; advice, never instructions. I was always a free agent at a living wage. Though the wage could never be called generous, especially for a man with a family, it was sufficient for me to live on in a rooming-house or a tenement-flat, and pay for a five-hundred-dollar Liberty bond. At the time that I left I was receiving one hundred and four dollars and car-fare per month—quite a raise in four years for an untrained woman who began on six dollars the week.

What we know as labor unrest is caused as much by the conditions under which workers struggle as the amount of wage so grudgingly paid them. The untangling of both those knotty problems is in the hands of our women.

On the way they untangle those two knots, as I see it, hangs the fate of our country, the United States as we know it to-day—whether it lasts fifty years or fifty centuries.

Now I know by actual experience what conditions were before this country entered the World War. I watched the improvement that followed—larger windows made in dark rooms to improve light and ventilation; when this was impossible workers would be moved into better quarters. I saw lofts that had not known a broom or wash-pail for years swept and garnished as though for a celebration.

One reason for this was the coming of the girl who didn't have to work for her living—the war-worker. I had managers tell me:

“You're an educated woman—ah—ah— Why, to tell the truth, I'm afraid you wouldn't be happy here. Our loft is not—not what we'd like it to be. Not very clean, you know.”

“What about your regular workers?” I asked him.

“Oh, they're different. They're used to it.”

At a munition plant in Hoboken the manager of a department jumped at me as an applicant for work. He was going to “place” me at once, and sent to the office for a pass. The employment manager happened to be in a “cranky” mood, or so the department manager explained to me, and said he could not issue a pass until he had me investigated. I left with the understanding that an investigator would see me that afternoon, and the manager urged me to report early the next morning ready for work.

The investigator did see me that afternoon, and because I answered her questions truthfully she learned that I am a college graduate. The next morning the employment manager issued me a pass without question, but when I returned to the office of red-haired Mr. Black, the department manager, he had changed his mind.

"Why, you're a college graduate!" he exclaimed, leaning forward in his swivel-chair and looking for all the world like a big frog ready to hop. "You wouldn't be happy here a day. You just wouldn't stand it."

Out in the passageway I chanced upon the girl who had conducted me to Mr. Black's office. When I told her that he had refused to give me a job she stared, then nodded her head.

"I mighter known he wouldn't take you on. He wants girls he can chuck under the chin and poke in the ribs and call by their first name," she told me. "He's foxy, that red-head, he seen he couldn't make free with you. You come with me. I'll take you to the employment manager. He'll give you a job in the office, real Gentile work."

But I'd had enough office work, so I refused her offer.

When I applied at Store Beautiful the employment manager apologized for offering me seventeen dollars a week. He was not allowed to pay more for an inexperienced saleswoman, he explained. When I accepted the job he quickly told me that there were many better-paying positions in the store, and if I stayed he would try to fit me into one of them. Remember this happened after the war. Employment managers had learned the value of educated working women.

Now I'd as soon try to reason with a herd of jackasses as with a selfish woman. It is because I learned during my four years in the underbrush that American women are not, as a rule, selfish when they understand conditions that I have written this book. It is because I know by experience that American women are, as a rule, unselfishly patriotic that I am adding to the narrative of my experience an expression of my opinion on that condition known as our "labor troubles."

The United States is to-day the most powerful nation in the world. We, its women, are the most powerful half

of the nation. Again we, its educated women of native birth and lineage, are the most powerful group in that half.

It is up to us how our country is coming through its period of labor troubles. Are we going to remain human cooties, forcing our fathers and husbands to beat down and rob their employees for the sake of getting money to support us in idle luxury?

They, the men of the United States, have given us, their womenfolks, the ballot and Prohibition. Not because they wanted either, but because we, their adored womenfolks, clamored for them. Every profession is open to us, every line of work.

What are we going to do with all this wealth of opportunity?

Our sister, the working woman, believes in us. She ties her faith to us—her hope for her children and their future. Many, many times I had women of the slums assure me that "rich ladies" fought for suffrage that they might get shorter hours for working women. And even more often they told me that the fight for Prohibition was fought and won by "rich ladies" for the protection of working-people's homes.

During the war we showed them that there was no work we couldn't do, and wouldn't do, when it was necessary. During the war through us they realized what work was with the stigma rubbed out—work was a badge of honor, idleness a disgrace.

To-day those women stand between us and chaos. A slender cordon of hope, they are holding back the surging multitude of unrest. Their men have ceased to believe in any method of getting justice except by violence.

What are we going to do?—measure up to the working-woman's faith in us, come out of our nests as cooties and, taking our place at her side as we did during the war, do

our share of the work. Or are we going to remain human cooties, let that cordon of hope crumble, be swept away?

There is one thing as certain as the rising of the sun. If we do not give, it will be taken from us.

Were I a girl growing up to-day I would demand of my parents an equal chance with my brother. If he was given his training—for trade or profession—I would have mine—trade or profession. I would insist on my obligations as a citizen, a future voter, to learn the condition and the needs of my country.

How can a girl vote intelligently if she spends her days debating on how high she can wear her skirt, or how low she can cut her camisole? That time is passed. We must either keep step with progress or be swept away by the class of women who have learned the lesson that we refused to be taught.

Only motherhood—bearing and caring for a living child—should excuse a woman from working for her living.









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