Coming Stories by **Edward Worthy** Edward Lawson Dorothy West

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## REMINISCENCES

## By MARY WHITE OVINGTON

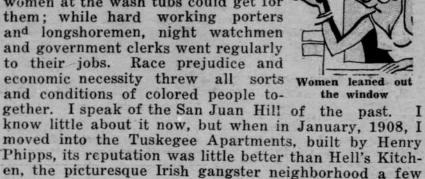
CHAPTER FIVE

Living on San Juan Hill A Lone White Woman Living in a City Block with 5,000 Colored Folk.

Not living on San Juan Hill in Cuba up which the the colored soldiers charged, but on San Juan Hill in New York, a poor neighborhood running from West 60th Street, to West 64th Street, between 10th and 11th Avenues. Whites dwelt on the avenues, colored on the streets. and fights between the two gave the hill its name. A rough neighborhood, but, at least among the Negroes, a place where all classes lived.

There were people who itched for a fight, and people who hated roughness. Lewd women leaned out of win-

dows, and neat, hard-working mothers early each morning made their way to their mistresses' omes. Men lounged on street cor-Hers in as dandified dress as their women at the wash tubs could get for them; while hard working porters and longshoremen, night watchmen and government clerks went regularly to their jobs. Race prejudice and economic necessity threw all sorts Women leaned out and conditions of colored people together. I speak of the San Juan Hill of the past. know little about it now, but when in January, 1908, I



of each building lot. The manage- some longshoremen, a decently paid known as Brother Baptist.

as yet shown no interest in settle-ment work, caring only for the housing end, I hoped, by quietly renting on my own account, to per-more than at Greenpoint, men did in' de streets right now. But who's watchmen, and must sleep through the day's noise. And lastly, far more than at Greenpoint, men did to study a neighborhood, and I had suade him to add social service not work at all, either because they my book to write as well as com-

children which the Walton Free ful, and they could find some wokindergarten was allowed to occupy in the morning. I could develop to support them. These men loungwhite homes we looked into, homes more work that later might be ed on street corners during the day, bordering on the Negro neighbor-supported. So I took a little furni- or played pool in one of the many hood, were more dirty than the

was familiar to me, but I found that colored boys and girls came before home attractive. A white spread or

Juan Hill, this was the exception, juvenile arrests. Where, as in a I thought of this one day when I pastor Union not the rule.

Jewish neighborhood, the push-cart was poking about in an inner court ident New There were families where the stood temptingly by the side walk, to find the home of an impoverish-

lower economic status of the Negro. going over the juvenile court records ance with the homes of well-to-do Greenpoint had been a factory in the stuffy court house. Ruth mistresses, but it was there. The neighborhood, and though the work Draper, then a young girl, a mem-streets, too, though they knew had been hard it had been fairly ber of the Junior League and work- fighting and heard constant. Girls worked in factories ing at Greenwich House, used to laughter and screams of terror, and shops, men worked regularly at help me. I wish she might have preserved a certain decency. I can skilled and unskilled labor. All got seen the cases instead of the records illustrate this in no better way

a decent wage, so that the house-only. We went patiently over the than by the fact that I never saw wife stayed at home giving her full pages and learned that environ- the obscene writing that had been time to her family's wants. On San ment was the determining factor in common in Greenpoint.

"Yes, we knows deys women walkin' de streets right now. But who's walkin' wid 'em?' ers had to go out to work, arrests me a flower it was done with grace.

was the Rev. George Simms of the rate among children."

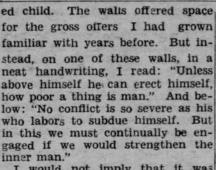
model tenements, to return four per As a domestic, she would be away esque and yet full of common sense. model tenements, to return four per accosted rudely. The race cent on the investment. Milholland, for twelve or fourteen hours. If the could preach as vivid a sermon me the one chair left. That morning she went out to clean, she put in as any in "God's Trombones". His ing she had sold the furniture and ceased to occur. Some of my friends thought I was running a friends thought I was running a

was in a tenement erected by Henry man who works early and late answer: "Yes, we knows dey's wo-Phipps, and while Mr. Phipps had about the place, receiving a scant men walkin' de streets. Dey's walk-

could not get jobs, or because the mittees to attend, but I managed to The house had a playroom for its jobs they might secure were hate-see a good deal. With a tenement supported. So I took a little lulling turn, a great many books, and movture, a great many books, and movpool rooms.

The absence of the mother from great many mangy dogs. But the ed into my flat. It had three rooms the home led to juvenile delinnegro, however poor, did not surthe home led to juvenile delinthe home led to juvenile delinthe attempt to make her Life among working class people quency. More than white children, render the attempt to make her San Juan Hill was very different from Greenpoint. There was, of course, the difference of race, or color, but I soon forgot that. The noticeable difference was in the sound that the property of the News of the

The REV. GEORGE H. SIMMS, pastor Union Baptist Church; president New York Baptist State Convention,



I would not imply that it was usual to find Shakespeare and Thomas a Kempis written upon the walls. I never saw them again. But the imagination and religious fervor that they expressed were familiar to these sordid city blocks.

Negro children, when taught good manners, enjoyed practicing them. Some of the children on my street were a delight to entertain. I loved to have them come to my flat, their hair standing out in there petty larceny abounded. And braids, their eyes bright, their hands where, as on San Juan Hill, moth-slender and pretty. If one handed

I remember walking down my were numerous for improper guard-block with an old Greenpoint friend view I had with him, I could not ianship. Our researches exploded and seeing a boy of eight run up to convince him of the value of all that the loose accusation that Negroes are born with a propensity to steal. The colored child stole no more and no less than the average white child.

My best friend on San Juan Hill My best frie

it, it was frequented chiefly by remember Annabel "ho came running ing-class neighbors for middle class newly-arrived Southerners. They to me one evening to say that her respectability. It would have been John E. Milholland, whose name husband and older children supshould be revered by all of us, was instrumental in having the Tuske-instruments huilt. He knew family. She did this by taking in

"It is the end," she said, offering never accosted learning through me of the Hightful housing conditions among the
Negro working class, persuaded
Phipps to put his second venture
in a Negro neighborhood. So the
Hill saw a fireproof, new-law tenethill saw a fireproof, new-law tenement, with steam heat and unlimitment, with steam heat and unlimitment was safer than leaving them locked

eight hours of work. When she got leaving his carpenter's bench to be baptized by John the Baptist beleaving his carpenter's bench to be baptized by John the Baptist beleaving his carpenter's bench to be baptized by John the Baptist beleaving his carpenter's bench to be baptized by John the Baptist belongs in "The Green Pastures."

He co-operated with all of us on the way home lost the money.

"It is the end." Organized charity came the next day and paid the rent, but there followed a long period of want and suffering. Anna bel told me one day what she expected to do when she grew up. "I shall dance," she declared. "Dancers make money. I shall not work the

eight hours of work. When she got leaving his carpenter's bench to be baptized by John the Baptist beleaving his carpenter's bench to be baptized by John the Baptist beleaving his carpenter's bench to be baptized by John the Baptist beleaving his carpenter's bench to be baptized by John the Baptist beleaving his carpenter's bench to be baptized by John the Baptist beleaving his carpenter's bench to be
with the way home lost the money.

"It is the end." Organized charity
came the next day and paid the rent, but there followed a long and inefficient woman unless she was luckly enough to get them in the way home lost the money.

The colored hard way home lost the money.

The color defining the way home lost the money.

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The color defining the way home lost the money.

The color defining the way home lost the money.

The color defining the money.

The co ed hot water, in the midst of its was safer than leaving them locked double-decker and dumbell apartin at home.

The men were unskilled laborers, had a rival in one of his deacons, and works and never has anything."

The men were unskilled laborers, had a rival in one of his deacons, and works and never has anything."

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The men were unskilled laborers, had a rival in one of his deacons, and works and never has anything."

Voting 20 Years Ago



my friends thought I

was the Rev. George Simms of the Union Baptist Church. Since San Juan Hill has become a West Indian neighborhood, his church has moved to Harlem, but when I knew it, it was frequented chiefly by remember Annabel—ho came running time left busy, warm-hearted work-

a disagreeable experience. I

At the end of eight months I saw been better educated, more sophistiment was in the hands of the City group, some porters in factory or Once, when an anti-suffragist that my settlement dream would cated, they might have been susand Suburban Homes Company.

I had begun my settlement work men in boarding-houses, with hours in a model tenement erected by as long as the women's. Many a Charles Pratt. My next venture boarding-house employs such a franchised, Brother Baptist said in the company.

Store. Some were general utility complained that if women were never be realized. Mr. Phipps was interested in housing, but his interest in the one interest stopped there. In the one interest working human beings. The years are also as the working human beings. The years are also as the working human beings. The years are also as the working human beings. The years are also as the working human beings. thought me a teacher and put me down at that.

> It spoke well for the work that had gone before mine, public school, mission, kindergarten, health department, charity organization society-that I was understood. They saw that I wanted to help. They believed that I respected them in their terrific struggle to make life easier for their children.

> It was many months mastered my disappointment, and that street and my home on it. I had met the Negro race and felt its charm, that charm that New York has not yet wholly destroyed. In the evening at my open window on the crowded street I hear

the children calling to one another in their play. They have a street song, "Sound dem weddin' bells," that I have not heard before . . . An evangelist moves past me saying, "Salvation is so convenient, don't forget that. Friends, it's convenient. It's for this world." An old woman, in a high, shaking voice sings, "Give me Jesus, give me Jesus. You may have all this world but give me Jesus." . . . It is afternoon. A knock comes at my door. I open it, and three little girls, in

slip shyly in. The oldest, she has Continued on Page Four

freshly laundered white dresses,