

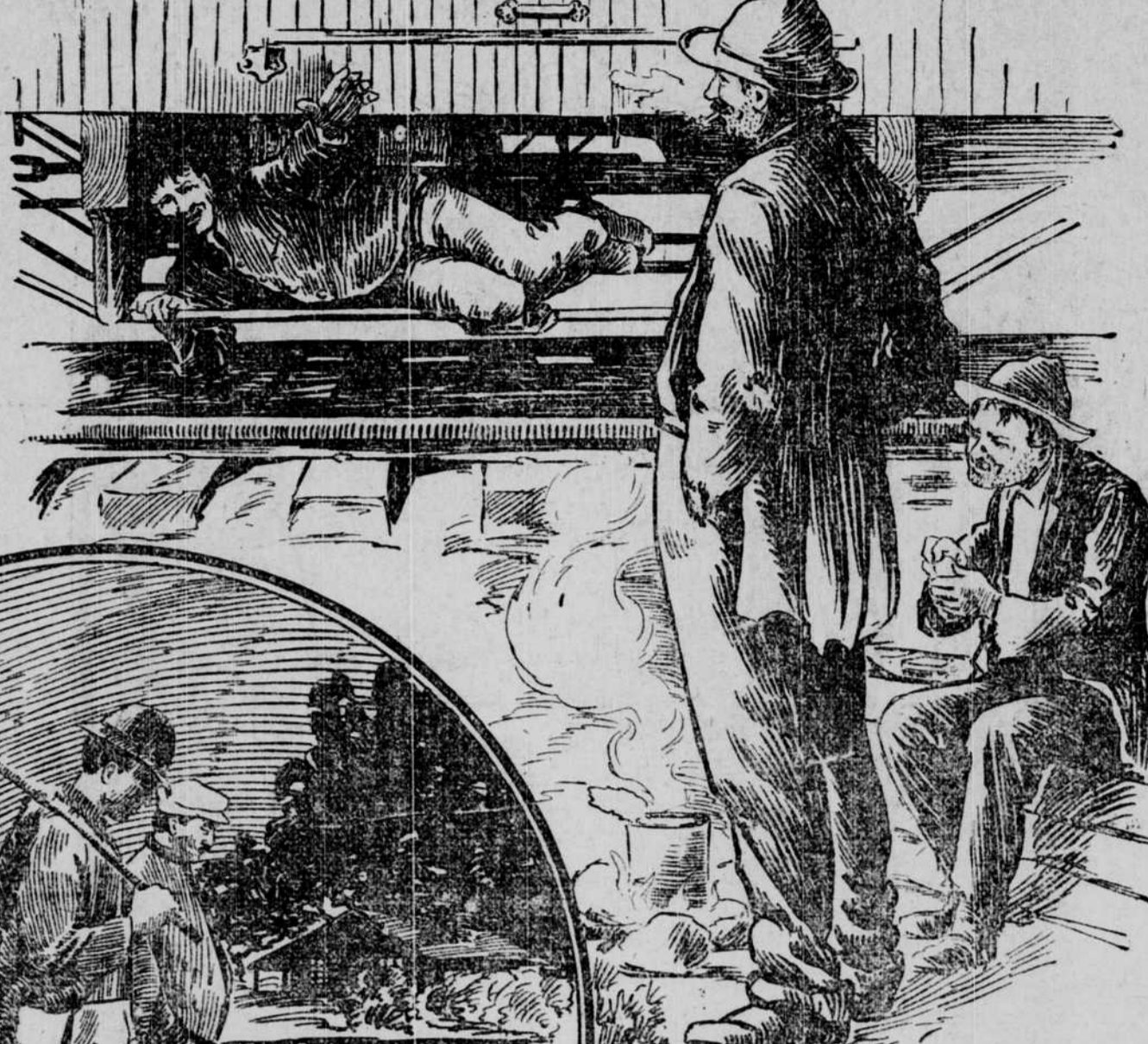
# AMERICA'S HOBO

**B**Y ONES and twos—a steady stream—the army of the American hoboes, 100,000 strong, is drifting back to the countryside. It has already started; it will be warm weather before the last of this host has left the cities.

All summer long these men will be traveling "deadhead" throughout the United States, working here and there a few days, but always moving on to the far-away fields that looked green. They will help gather the berries, the hops, the hay and the harvests. They will wander as far west as the coast and as far south as the Gulf of Mexico.

All the men in this army are not "tramps" in the common acceptance of the word, for some are willing to work. Therefore the real

## ARMY BY DANIEL P. WILES.



HITTING THE GRIT

tramps despise them and call them "gay cats." But from this great host of casual workers—the despair of sociologists—the ranks of the tramps and the "yeggmen" are kept full. Indeed, in this great aggregation of men that the city pushes forth each spring and receives back each autumn the tramps might be likened to the non-commissioned officers and the "yeggmen" to the commanders of regiments and brigadiers. These "gay cats" are simply the private soldiers. But no matter by what name they are known to penologists, they all spring from the same soil; the slums of the great city or the factory town. Freight trains carry most of them about the country. Despite the attempts on the part of the various railroads to abate the tramp evil, it appears to be irremediable. As fast as it is subdued on one road it is sure to break out on another with increased force.

The "gay cat" is the lowest order of the peripatetic underworld. He is generally devitalized, incompetent and lacking in physical courage. Therefore he sneaks into an empty box car and makes his journey slowly, but in comparative comfort. The professional "hobo" and some of the "yeggmen," on the other hand, scorn the freights and disdain to ride on anything but passenger trains, especially the much-advertised limited flyers, so they can boast about it afterward and want themselves around the campfires of their kind.

There are not a few "gay cats," however, who travel on passenger trains, and these are, curiously enough, those whose trade is setting the steel on big buildings or bridges, men of nerve and daring. These ride either "blind baggage" (between the front-doorless end of the baggage car and the locomotive tender), or on the trucks of the wheels, under the cars themselves. Riding "blind baggage" is comparatively comfortable, but the riders are liable to have lumps of coal thrown at them by the firemen. "Holding down the rods," though, which is one of the slang terms for riding the trucks, is more dangerous and dirty, but less subject to interruption en route. It is when the train takes a curve at high speed that the "gay cat" who is riding on the trucks goes on his last and longest journey. Sleep or hunger or fatigue may loosen his grasp for a second, and he goes under the hurrying wheels. This manner of death is called "grassing the rails," which is quite graphic enough to warrant avoiding further description. Thousands of "gay cats" and others risk their lives blindly in this way every hour of the 24. This item in the butcher's bill of the railroads is enormous.

There are some travelers' tales that have been told so often by "gay cats" and by tramps that they have become tradition—almost classics of their kind. One is the story of a man now known as "Portland Shorty." He was a "gay cat" riding the trucks on a fast passenger train in the west some years ago. There was a bad wreck during the night and many were killed. "Shorty" covered with dirt and blood, and really very seriously hurt, finally succeeded in extricating himself from the wreck and crawled out. By that time it was daylight and the relief train with its surgeons had arrived. "Shorty" was a man of education and intelligence. Groaning with pain which was not stimulated by the company surgeon and claim agent bend over him. "He'll be maimed for life if he lives. Better settle with him as well as you can," he heard the surgeon whisper to the claim agent. "Shorty" signed a waiver of damages inside of ten minutes and got \$3,600 in cash. He was taken to the company's hospital, cared for and cured. Strangely enough he kept his money.

Other less industrious "gay cats" spend the

winter in jail or in the workhouse. The workhouse is ill-named; there is no work to be done there. Others "work the missions"—"go 'round the Horn," they call it. There are over two score missions of various denominations in

Now he is running a large and gaudy saloon in Portland, Ore., and trying to forget that he ever rode the trucks on a fast train.

The men who ride thus on the passenger trains—if they do much of it—soon grow deaf in one ear or blind in one eye—sometimes totally deaf-blind sightless. This is caused by the terrific roar of the wheels against the rails and the continuous hurricane of dust and gravel. Many trampstry to protect their heads and faces in some way, but it is impossible to avoid the danger of bursted car drums or hopelessly damaged eyes. When a man crawls out from under a fast train after a 200-mile run he looks but little like a human being.

During the summer the "gay cat" works with such persistence as nature has given him. If he cannot find work he is not above begging or stealing in many cases. Long ago the farmers used to lodge and feed them in their own houses. Now they make them lodge in abandoned barns or in open air camps. At berry or hop-picking they are paid by the quantity gathered; in the harvest or hay fields they receive the minimum of a dollar a day and their food. In a camp of "gay cats" at night they gather around the fire and play cards for small stakes or tell stories. Sometimes a "gay cat's" money goes in gambling, but he is often despoiled by the professional "hobo," who takes his coin away from him by brute force. One brawny, able-bodied tramp, with or without a gun, will "stick up" and rob a group of several "gay cats" without much difficulty. The tramps' roost, too, by the way, is often held up and robbed in turn by the prowling "yeggman" with a pistol of large caliber in his fist.

At any rate, the poor "gay cat" returns to the cities in the autumn as penniless as when he left it in the early summer. If by any chance he has any money left, it goes in the cheap saloons along the tough streets. During the winter he keeps soul and body together by washing dishes or acting as waiter in the cheap restaurants; by doing odd jobs, such as carrying signs and snow shoveling; by addressing envelopes—if he can write well enough—and by doing other such hopeless work. Then, too, there are the missions and pickings and stealings now and then when there is not too much risk of arrest.

A portion of the "gay cats" are dish washers in the cheap restaurants. They work from 15 to 18 hours a day for an average wage of three dollars a week and food and lodging. Their surroundings are very bad. Their feet are almost constantly wet with water heavily charged with washing soda that is used to cleanse the greasy dishes; and the air is as foul as can be imagined. The poor "gay cat" misnomer—devitalized by hereditary ills and dissipation, soon gets to the end of his moral tether. Of all the legitimate work there is, dishwashing in a cheap restaurant is the lowest. There is no depth beyond it, and the only sequence is the city hospital, the almshouse, the morgue and the potter's field.

Other less industrious "gay cats" spend the

city. No outcast above the rank of a "gay cat" would think of entering one. The "gay cat" can get his bed and two meals by simply applying, and if he pretends to be converted and gives "testimony" now and then, perhaps he can get meals and lodging for two or three weeks, with possibly an odd job occasional-ly. When the "gay cat" grows tired of one mission or has outstayed his welcome, he moves on to the next. There are enough of them to last him through the winter if he is discreet. The election is also a source of dishonest revenue to these by-products of an industrial age. Money, shoes and winter clothing circulate freely then, and the number of nomads is augmented.

The majority of this vast army of 100,000 or so are American born, but of foreign parents. The Irish and Germans head the list of these chronic wanderers. The first generation apparently was hard working and reasonably honest. The second seems to have a large sediment of the "gay cat" or "tramp" element in it. Why this is so never has been explained satisfactorily. Possibly it is because the fathers and mothers worked themselves nearly to death trying to bring up their children on a higher social level than they themselves ever had enjoyed. At any rate, the fact of degeneracy in the second generation remains.

In Massachusetts many misdemeanors, such as trespassing on railroad tracks, riding in box cars, tramping, begging and vagrancy in all their phases, are punishable by sending the offender to the East Bridgewater farm colony. Last year there were over 3,000 commitments to that institution. Vagrants are sent to East Bridgewater on indeterminate sentences, the maximum time being at present two years. Until recently the maximum term was three years, but the shorter term has been found to be sufficient. In the case of first offenders, release on probation is permitted at the end of nine months if conduct has been exemplary. It is estimated that but 15 per cent. of the men thus paroled relapse into vagrancy in the state of Massachusetts. Doubtless many of them do elsewhere, but more than half of them are regenerated, so that instead of being a charge upon the state they become an asset. The East Bridgewater farm colony is looked upon by penologists as an unequal success.

So far as can be judged now, this is the only practical way of regenerating and revitalizing this large class of mental and physical incompetents. Life and work, under proper discipline, in the open air do more to make good citizens—or at least to transform parasites on society into producers—than anything else, so the penologists say.

able powers. Even though they show no evidence of it at the time it is sinking into the curious, eager thought and must bear fruit.

**A Very Odd Clock.**  
An extraordinary addition has been made to the exhibition of inventions now being held in Berlin. A shoemaker named Wegner, living in Strasburg, has sent in a clock of the grand-father shape, nearly six feet high, made entirely of straw. The wheels, pointers, case and every detail are

exclusively of straw. Wegner has taken 15 years to construct this strange piece of mechanism. It keeps perfect time, but under the most favorable circumstances cannot last longer than two years.

"Darling," said the American heiress. "It is not true, is it, that you want to marry me for my money?"  
"No, dearrest," answered the duke de Ragges et Pachez, "but I don't hold it against you."—Baltimore American.

**MUST BELIEVE IT.**  
Every Reader Will Concede the Truth of This Statement.

One who suffers with backache or any form of kidney trouble wants a lasting cure, not merely a temporary benefit. Profit by the example of Rev. J. M. Suffed, of 2179 S. 8th St., Lincoln, Neb., who confirms a report of his cure after several years. "I told in a statement made for publication in 1900 how Doan's Kidney Pills had relieved me after other remedies had failed," said Rev. Suffed. "I have no hesitation in confirming that statement now. I have used Doan's Kidney Pills at various times and they have never failed me."

Sold by all dealers. 50 cents a box. Foster-Milburn Co., Buffalo, N. Y.

**A Dubious Tribute.**  
The young theological student who had been supplying the Rushby pulpit for two Sundays looked wistfully at Mrs. Kingman, his hostess for the time being. "Did you like the sermon this morning, if I may ask?" he inquired.

"You done real well with the material you selected," said Mrs. Kingman, with much cordiality. "As I said to Zenas on the way home, I've heard a dozen or more sermons 'preached on' that text, and this young man's the first one that ever made me realize how difficult 'twas to explain.'"—Youth's Companion.

Sheer white goods. In fact, any fine wash goods when new, owe much of their attractiveness to the way they are laundered, this being done in a manner to enhance their textile beauty. Home laundering would be equally satisfactory if proper attention was given to starching, the first essential being good Starch, which has sufficient strength to stiffen, without thickening the goods. Try Defiance Starch and you will be pleasantly surprised at the improved appearance of your work.

**The First Word.**  
"That is what I call an ideal marriage," Hardy declared to his wife as they were walking homeward after an evening at the Carrolls'. "Actually, I believe both think absolutely alike." "Yes, they are certainly charming," asserted Mrs. Hardy. "But about thinking, Joe, if you will notice, she generally thinks first."—Youth's Companion.

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Examine carefully every bottle of CASTORIA, a safe and sure remedy for infants and children, and see that it bears the Signature of *W. C. Little* in Use For Over 30 Years. The Kind You Have Always Bought.

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Howell—I thought you didn't like the way the tailor made that check suit and that you were going to make him take it back.  
Powell—I tried to, but I found that protested checks didn't go with him.—Bohemian.

**For Colds and Grip.**  
Lane's Pleasant Tablets (laxative) cure colds in an hour and are the best treatment for grip. Do not wait a minute when you feel a cold coming on, but get a box of these tablets and save suffering and expense. They are sold by druggists and dealers at 25 cents a box. Orator F. Woodward, Le Roy, N. Y., sample free.

**The Insignia.**  
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"Because it is some natural to him to wear a slouch hat and a white neck tie."

**Try Murine Eye Remedy**  
For Red, Weak, Watery Eyes, Compounded by Experienced Physicians. Conforms to the highest standards of Law. Murine Doesn't Smart. Soothes Eye Pain. Try Murine for Your Eyes.

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Lewis' Single Binder cigar—richest, most satisfying smoke on the market. Your dealer or Lewis' Factory, Peoria, Ill.

The best thing to do when you catch a cold is to let go of it.

**ONLY ONE "BROMO QUININE."**  
That is LAXATIVE BROMO QUININE. Look for the signature of F. W. GLOYNE. Used the World over to Cure a Cold in One Day. 25c.

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For children teething, soothes the gums, reduces inflammation, always cures wind colic. 25c a bottle.

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