

THE MANY HOMELESS WOMEN

WILLING TO WORK BUT THERE IS NO PLACE FOR THEM.

New York Tribune Farmer: While the problem of the woman worker who at middle age finds herself thrust out of her position to face old age and poverty is sufficiently pathetic, what of the gentlewoman who at thirty-five or fifty, or perhaps at sixty, through some whirligig of fate, is thrown on her own resources?

The middle aged woman who has always supported herself has an equipment of brain on hand, or both, that may eventually land her in a position, if not in New York, in some city less overstocked with labor. But the woman who "has never had to work," who "has always had her own home," who has never learned to do anything well, yet at middle life walks the streets of New York vainly "looking for a job"—ah! what of her in this roaring, swirling maelstrom of a city?

Not Even Temporary Shelter.

"Do you realize," said a woman who administers the charities of one of New York's millionaires, "that there is not in all New York a place where a reduced gentlewoman out of funds can go—not a home or an institution of any sort that will take her in and tide her over her crisis till she can get her feet again?"

"New York is honeycombed with charities, millions are given away annually in philanthropy, mission workers overlap in the houses of the very poor, yet absolutely nothing is being done for the poor lady between thirty-five and sixty who is obliged to earn her own bread.

"Now here," and she ran her eye down a page of the 'Charities Directory,' "is a home for 'indigent females'—admission fee, \$200. How, I ask you, is a woman who expects to be put out on the street any day because she can't meet her rent to raise \$200?"

"Here is a home for 'destitute, respectable women'—admission \$100, and the candidates must be the widows of missionaries. Here are church homes innumerable; but this one only accepts women of sixty-five or over, that one charges \$5 a week, another has a waiting list of three years, another requires \$200 admission, \$50 for burial expenses and \$5 for examining physician's fee.

"And so on and so on." She closed the book impatiently. "You'd think a great deal was being done to meet this class of distress, but it's all on paper.

"I heard of a new home for women, to be opened in the fall. 'Now,' I said to myself, 'we shall have something that will really touch the problem of the reduced gentlewoman struggling or stranded in New York.' I wrote, and found that from \$200 to \$500 down would be required, and applicants must be sixty or more!

"Of all classes of needy ones in this big city, reduced gentlewomen are the most neglected."

True Cases of Distress.

Then she went on to sketch the stories of the poor things who drift to her, in their distress, seeking a home, a friend, work, resources, counsel, hope—everything.

"There's the widow of a university professor—she's making neckties in an East Side factory for \$6 a week. She is fifty-three years old. Her husband died; her family dropped off one by one. At first she tried to keep genteel, playing accompaniments or reading to invalids. Slowly she sank, sank, till now she earns her pittance in the buzz and roar of a factory, living on two meals a day, her home a hall bedroom, four flights up in a cheap tenement house.

"And there's a nice southern woman of thirty-eight or forty who may be on the street by now, for when she

came to see me the last time she owed a week's rent and had nothing to do. She writes most unusual verse, has tried cataloguing, literary work, clerical work, copying, addressing—but everything has proved to be temporary, and she has had one sickness on top of another, until now she has lost heart and is on the verge of nervous prostration. This woman can't get up of a morning before 8:30 o'clock, yet she is walking ten miles a day, looking for positions, waiting an hour here to see some one, half an hour there to present a letter, and so on. I hope I have a clerical position for her at a club, but it will be only temporary. She had a chance to go to a home in the country for a month. 'I can't go, I can't take a rest,' she cried. 'I've got to look for a job.' What will become of her?"

Fraulein Drops Out.

"We had a woman of sixty come to us last spring. She was one of the most brilliant conversationalists I ever met. Her husband had had a good income, they had lived much in Europe, had never put up a cent and—well, when I saw her she was out of clothes that her hips stood out of her old velvet gown, a last remnant of her former finery.

"Now, any one hearing this would naturally say: 'Why can't the Charity Organization society cope with a case like that? We give the society money year after year. What is it doing for women like this?'"

"The Charity Organization society could do nothing for her. A few people got together, put up some money and sent her back to Europe, where she had friends to help her. We shipped her out of the country; it was the only thing we could do for her.

"Then there was Fraulein —, poor old Fraulein, in her immaculate white ties, her old velvet bonnet, speckless and spotless, her only headgear winter, and her shabby black. She had come to America at fifty-five on the death of the last of her patrons among the titled families of France, where she had taught her mother tongue. The best she could do was to get one temporary position after another, and she sank, sank, till she was stranded beyond description. Little, shrinking old gentlewoman that she was, she had not the necessary push to make her way with private pupils. She was known at all the settlements, all the relief organizations, and everybody liked and respected her and everybody helped her. Kind hearted, charming women listened to her story and sent her on from one to the other.

"Where is Fraulein now?" you ask. I don't know. She's gone; nobody knows where—vanished; dropped out. That's happened oftener than you would believe. These poor things will come to you every few weeks, sometimes for periods of years, then suddenly they will stop coming, and you never see or hear anything more of them.

"One more instance to show what a plucky fight some of these women put up. Here is a girl who has always wanted to be a kindergarten. Wherever she applied they turned her down because she had had no training. Now she has just completed a two years' course at the cost of most heroic sacrifices. While she was getting her training she lived all alone in a vacant house in Elizabeth street infested with rats—a horrible experience. She got it rent free in return for keeping up the insurance, and there she did her own cooking and washing, handicapped all the time by a morphine fiend of a father.

Living on Ragged Edge.

"Now, at thirty-five, she has her professional equipment, and what is she doing with it? The best she can get is a position to substitute in a truant school. Her pay poor and precarious, she ekes out with 75 cents' worth of sewing a week for a church charity and \$1.50 from a church kindergarten class. She has a tidy little home in two rooms in a model tenement house, but she finds it impossible to get any new clothes, and last night she came to me and cried, and said her employers were finding fault with her because she was so shabby.

"The fault of the reduced gentlewoman is she isn't interesting. If she were a young working girl, rich, warmhearted people would fall over themselves to help and save her; if she were an 'indigent poor,' relief agencies would overlap in their efforts to pay her rent, feed and clothe her and give her summer holidays to boot. But people who give always want to give where they can see results, and they would rather spend \$100 on ten girls to bring them out of something than put it all—or any of it—on one faded, neutral, middle aged woman who keeps her trials to herself."

Tells How C. O. S. Works.

Continuing, the charity worker quoted above, took up the way one or two organizations handle cases like these.

"This is what the charity organiza-

tion society does to a refined woman. First, she sits among the chronic beggars of the city waiting for her case to be probed. Then, if homeless, she is sent to one of the society's boarding houses, where she sleeps and eats with the foulest sort of women while being 'investigated.' Investigation consists in sending some young woman around to all the addresses the young woman has given and hearing what anyone wishes to say about her. Most likely, considering her plight, she has no very near relatives left, so it is generally some remote relative, who, perhaps, never liked her or her family, and whose contributions to the 'investigation' will be that 'Jane had a nasty temper when she was a girl,' or that she always said 'Jane would go to the poorhouse if she bought such expensive stockings.' When it has found out all that can be said about her it begins to act, but all the women I ever knew ran away before the investigation was finished.

"A refined woman of forty years applied to me who had been locked out of her room and her trunk put out in the hall by the janitor because she owed three weeks' rent. I took her to the young women's Christian association. All it could do for her was to take her in for the night, give her three meals the next day, take her name and try to find her work—and that to a homeless woman who had been walking the streets three weeks looking for a job!

Well Dressed, or No Job.

"It is not so much lack of force that brings women to this pass as misplaced energy. They have never been trained to do anything, and here they are launched on a sea of specialists. They cannot ring people's bells and tell their story without references; they cannot get a job even as nurse or chambermaid. Where are they to get their references? From their rich friends at home, who talk over their downfall at teas and sewing circles? Who wants to employ an underfed, out-of-elbows woman of forty-five years who sits around on the benches of an employment office in a cockled, faded skirt, a soiled shirtwaist and a battered hat and tells you she has no references because she never worked anywhere before? To get a position it is absolutely necessary to be pretty well dressed. Clothes count for more in New York than in any city in the world."

As to the remedy suggested by Mrs. Gabrielle Stewart Mulliner in The Sunday Tribune a few weeks ago, that in domestic service the reduced gentlewoman should find her refuge, the speaker said: "It is no use theorizing. There is a social stigma about domestic labor. The woman who earns her living by cooking can never be received as a social equal—she has ostracised herself. Is that a solution?"

"I want some man to look at things as they are and realize the fearful extremities these women are in. If some home could be built where they could stay for a month when they were out of work and money which would also be an employment bureau for a refined class of labor it would save a world of tragedy. If I had the tongue and the pen I would stop the rich people of New York from helping the picturesque lazzaroni any more or squandering their sympathy and their sentiment on the attractive working girl. They should not shut their cheap hotels to women over thirty-five years old, as the Trowmart Inn is doing. The reduced gentlewoman is the deserving poor."

A PROMISING PRECEDENT.

Suppose that Great Britain should install a navy yard at Toronto or Port Stanley or Kingston and begin to build half a dozen Dreadnaughts to patrol and defend the Canadian lake front. The least the business interests of Chicago and Cleveland and the rest of our lake communities could ask would be seven American Dreadnaughts a little bigger and better than the British six. Canada would, of course, have to meet the raise and the United States would have to go Canada a little better until the great lakes would be cloudy with warships as the milky way is cloudy with stars. As a matter of fact there is on Lake Ontario one diminutive warship of each nation, two on each other lake except Lake Champlain, on which there is one. With all other international waters filling with warships how does this happen? President Eliot of Harvard explained it the other day in an address at Ottawa. After the close of the last war with Great Britain the Rush-Bagot treaty of 1817 was drawn in which it was stipulated that this number of armed vessels should be the limit, and that these should not exceed 100 tons burden with an eighteen-pound cannon. No Hague conference was needed. The terrifying term "international" or even "limitation of armament" was not called into use, but only a modicum of simple, practical sense. The proposition to neutralize

leading ocean routes, and the suggestion that next summer's Hague conference at least talk about means of stopping the mad race of battleship building seems not necessarily all mellow moonshine in the light of this experience.

RESTRICTING THE HEN.

Whatever its relation to socialism, communism is distinctly on the down grade, if not everywhere, at least in Nebraska. The great western Nebraska common on which the herds of all comers were supposed to graze on equal terms were soon fenced by the best shots and the strongest arms. The fences down, by order of the government, a demand arises for a partition of the common inheritance on a leasing plan, and to save the grazing value of the land this will in all probability have in time to be provided. The one vestige of communism yet remaining in more closely settled communities, namely the free range for fowls, has always been a hot-bed of discord, setting housewife against housewife, garden against garden, and henless men against men with hens. The march of reform has reached this subject in numerous radical communities. The city of York, which long ago eliminated the open season for saloons, has at length taken advanced ground on the chicken question. Hereafter at all seasons the useful and industrious hen must exert her genius at doing what we hired Mr. Shonts to do, in her own back yard. A strict inter-garden commerce law forbids the exercise of her Harrimanic instincts. We hear as in a dream her cry that thus hampered in her business operations eggs must at once be scarce. The man next door will not be moved. He has noticed that however free she has been to excavate his pea crop the ensuing eggs were always laid in his neighbor's barn.

TELEPHONING BY "WIRELESS."

Last Friday evening a group of men sat in the tower of the Times building on upper Broadway, New York, and listened to telephone messages from a room at Thirty-ninth and Broadway. One of the messages said, "Soon every up-to-date reporter will be equipped with a wireless telephone, which he will ground with his heel in the mud and through which he will tell his city editor that the rumor that Mrs. Blank has abandoned her poodle dog is false."

This prediction was not altogether unwarranted, for the prediction itself was telephoned without wires through a mile or so of agitated New York atmosphere. When the messages had been heard to full satisfaction the apparatus was changed and the teleharmonium, which proposes to put music on tap at the end of a wire in any house willing to pay for it, was heard likewise without the intervention of wires. Dr. DeForest, the author of the experiments, predicts that soon telephone messages can be sent to persons at sea, out of sight of land. Imagination strains at these developments, for who can be certain, in view of these things so unthinkable but yesterday, that these advances are not closing the gap between what has been called physical and what has been called metaphysical; that in time the "apparatus" may not be necessary or even so much be required as to "ground with his heel in the mud."

If the railroads intend to contest the new passenger fare law as has been reported, they will probably be too cautious in protecting their own rights to take off trains and in other ways to discourage travel. A company that reduces its facilities and attractiveness to travelers immediately after the law is passed will be in a poor position to show later that the returns under a 2-cent rate are unremunerative. The court may decide that until a trial is made with the same facilities as were offered before the test, the experience cannot be regarded as conclusive.

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