WORLD

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WHAT BECOMES OF BABIES.

HUNDREDS AND HUNDREDS OF LITTLE ONES GIVEN AWAY YEARLY.

Not the Petted Darlings of the Rich, but the Infants Born to Shame—These Are the Ones that Are Given into Alien Hands—Regular Traffic in New-Born Babes—A Money-Making Trade in Humanity.

What name awakens such universally tender feelings as that of "baby?" Last week some philanthropist wrote to THE WORLD to suggest that I try to find out what becomes of all the baby waifs in this great city. Not the little ones who are cordially welcomed by proud parents, happy grandparents and a large circle of loving relatives, but the many hundreds of babies whose coming is greeted with grief and whose unhappy mothers hide their little lives in shame. Unhappily there are hundreds and hundreds of them, but it is an impossible task to tell what their fate is.

However, here is a condensed account of my studious inquiries in this direction. I took several Sunday newspapers and made note of many of the medical and manicure advertisements. The following is the result: Dr. Hawker, of No. 21 West Thirteenth street, has a suggestive advertisement. I thought from that he might know something on the subject I wished to investigate, so I called on him. The door opened in response to my knock, and a well-dressed, short man, with a bald head, looked out over his glasses at me. I saw a young man in the office, so I said, with a blush not at all assumed: "I want to speak with you privately, please."

"Oh, yes, yes," he said, stepping out into the hall and closing the office door; "step this way. Wait here, I will see you presently."

He opened a door and I entered a back room. It was already occupied by a man and woman. From appearances, the bed-lounge, cupboard, table, kitchen-stove and bureau, I think that room answered the purpose of an entire house. No one spoke, so I sat down on the lounge and took in my surroundings.

The front office, into which I was soon ushered, was vastly different from the room in the rear. The floor was nicely carpeted, and the chairs, desks and medicine case all helped to lend the air of the office of a well-to-do physician. The doctor drew his chair close to mine in a confidential manner and waited, inquiringly, for me to begin. My position was a delicate one, and I knew it. So I said: "I read your advertisement, and as you say you give 'advice free,' I thought I would come to you for aid. There is a—a baby I want to dispose of. Can you help me?"

WHAT TO DO WITH IT.

"Yes. How old is the child?"

"It was born on the 5th of May," I answered, with a gasp.

"Yes; pretty good child by this time. Boy or girl?"

"Oh, a girl!" (I hadn't thought of this before.) "A girl? too bad. They are very hard to get rid of. Now, if it was only a boy you would have more chance." I got a little quaky by this time, and I almost felt like assuring him that it made no difference to me, that really if boys were easier to harbor for it might just as easily be said a boy. Luckily I kept still.

"The child is healthy?" I nodded my head.

"What complexion?"

"Neither dark nor fair," I replied, as I couldn't tell the complexion of a babe I had never seen.

"What shall I do with it?"

"The child is yours!" he asked.

I was almost stunned, for I feared next he would ask me questions I could not answer without disposed of without any questions being asked. Can it be done?"

"Yes, it is done daily. It is mostly done when the child is born. However, I can advertise for you. Will you make a full surrender?"

"What is that?"

"You give up the child and never know where it goes or anything more about it. I will do this for you for $25; you to pay advertising and all outside expenses."

This was soon agreed on. I did not hesitate at $25 when I was never going to pay it.

"Tell me something about such cases. It is all new to me. What becomes of the babies and how can the mothers tell whether they live or die or are treated well?" I asked, aiming for the news I was in search of.

"After a mother makes full surrender of a babe which is done at the place it is born, she has no way to tell what becomes of it. Of course, it may be ill-treated or feared in the wrong manner, but I am to take the chance. We advertise and people apply. We never ask them who or what they are. I don't know as much about them as I do about you this moment. Many of the women come veiled and we never even see their faces. If satisfied they take the babe, pay their fee, jump into a carriage and are never known where. The

"Of course there are some women who do not make full surrender, but get me to procure boarding places for the babies. I had a woman who lived in Fifty-second street that did all the work for me, but she died a few weeks ago, and I have no one since. I can have your child boarded for $4 a week. No, the care is not what mothers would give. What is the death rate of such children? At the very least eighty out of one hundred. You think it horrible? Well, it's the way of the world. Women who do not want the expense of a child, and who do not wish to make full surrender, leave them at the Catholic Home in Sixteenth street, near Lexington avenue. When the home is not full, a basket is hung on the door-knob at night, and women drop their babies into it. If you are not a Catholic you won't want to do that. Others give them to the Commissioners, who send them to Ward's Island, where there are 800 children. If you dread bad treatment and large death rates you should see that place!"

I pretended that I had some love for the imaginary child, and really I did have, so I said I should take the night to think it over, an hour decided to relinquish it I would return on the morrow.

BOY BABIES BETTER THAN GIRLS.

Mrs Comradeau,
Healing Medium. Hours, 9 to 9,
West 15th st.

So read the next advertisement on my list. I had no idea who she was or what, but somehow the notice seemed to suggest that I would not apply to her in vain. She lived in a large, three-story, brown-stone house, which had the appearance, from the closed shutters and doors, of being unoccupied. I rang the bell repeatedly before I was shown into the presence of the woman, who was not ill-looking. My first story had been such a success that I decided to repeat it, with a slight difference. As the doctor said girls were hard to get rid of, I determined this time it should be a boy, and so have every chance there was.

"I have a child I want to get rid of, without being known or appearing in the case. Can you help me?"

She then asked the age, health and complexion of the baby boy. Apparently she was satisfied, for she said she could board him out at $4 a week for me. When I told her it was necessary that I cut off all connection with the child, she said for $10 she would get me some one to take it. She not only my accent as she asked me how long I had been from France. I told her I was a Southerner and she said she knew I did not belong to New York or I would not have to ask so many questions on the subject.

"It seems odd for you to keep the child so long," she said. "I always advertise them in about a day after they are born. I do not charge anything for placing babies when they are born here, but, as yours was not, I will have to charge you $10 for my trouble. That is little enough, and you must keep all other expenses, for I may not be able to place him for a month or so. How do I place them? Well, if the mother makes full surrender I advertise them and lots of people answer. Plenty come only through curiosity and many in hopes of getting a trace of news. Sometimes they imagine they can see resemblances in the baby's face to one they suspect. I always know such people, as they ask who the mother is, what she is like, where from, if I have any knowledge of the father, and what sort of a man visited the mother while she was here. I very quickly show them the door. Those who want babies never ask a single question.

WHAT BECOMES OF THEM.

"What do they do with them? Ah, that is hard to say. I have known women to get babies repeatedly, but I don't know what for. Who are the mothers? They are never poor girls, but all come from the middle and higher classes. Not one out of a hundred is a working girl. Do they get rid of the children? Only occasionally. They generally tell me to get a home and they will pay for the keeping. I have a long list of people. They mostly live in flats, who keep themselves on the incomes derived from mothers. Sometimes the mothers know where their children are and visit them, but oftener all the business is done through me. No, I do not suppose the best care is taken of babies. What can one expect of a woman who may have twelve to care for? When they die they are buried as the woman's child and no questions are asked."

"Are there many babies?"

"Why, my dear, there is no place that can equal New York. There is a doctor who runs a large place on Sixth avenue for aristocrats alone, and his place is always filled. He keeps all the books, but I can't say what he does with them. He never knows who his visitors are, and he only asks one question of them, that is, what should he do with them in case they die. I have had girls come to me whose homes were only a few blocks above here and no one was ever the wiser. It is seldom I know my guests. I have no desire to know. They do not see one another. I charge from $5 a week to $25. Do I have plenty? My house is never empty. I have only one room unoccupied now. In connection with this I am a doctor and I give massage and electric baths. There are free homes for children, but if you want the child to live you won't take the chances there. Yes, a number of children die at birth. The mothers are never here longer than two or three weeks."

I had all the news I wanted from her and so I bade her a friendly good-by, promising to bring the babe and pay her $10 for its disposal in any manner, so that I was left entirely clear of all connections with it. She asked me no personal questions.

In West Sixteenth street I called at several manicure parlors, but they were found to be legitimate, as far as I could ascertain, although very few of them seemed at all surprised at the nature of my visit. From an advertisement of Mrs. Stone's I considered she could give me some valuable information as to what became of all the babies. I called the woman who made her appearance as she was Mrs. Stone. She said no, that the advertisement was put in for a regular practicing physician of Brooklyn. I wanted the address, but she said she was not allowed to give it, but if I would return in a few hours she would ascertain if I could see the party.

A BROOKLYN "HOME."

I got the address on my return, and I went away over to Howard and Monroe streets, Brooklyn. A commodious frame house, surrounded by an iron fence, stood directly on the corner. It proved to be the one I wanted. From all indications the house was but recently occupied. To the woman who answered to the name of Mrs. Stone, I repeated my oft-told tale, and asked her prices. She could not think of having the child adopted for less than $50.

"I presume you have plenty of this business to do," I suggested.

"Plenty; why there is no business that can compare with it."

"It is a blessing there is some one to take charge of the babies, else it would be hard on them, I suppose," I suggested, in hopes she would venture some information.

"It would make me sick to try to tell you what is done many times by girls who have not enough money to pay for having their babies adopted. I knew one girl, the daughter of a clergyman in Jersey City, who ran away from home and came to New York. After all her expenses were paid she had not enough money to pay for having the child adopted. When she was able to return home she stayed a day or two, nursing and taking her baby, started, saying that she was going home. On the way she smothered the child. That was the last of it."

"What do I do with the babies? Well, I advertise one as soon as it is born. I never allow the mother to even see its face. Sometimes I know who takes the child, but more frequently I do not. Some people are particular and want the child born in wedlock, so I have several marriage certificates on hand to satisfy them. Then they never see the mother, or she them. We know nothing of the child after it is taken away. Oh, yes, the business pays, for it is only people of the higher classes who are our patients."

"Mrs. Stone, if babies die while in your care, is it difficult to obtain a burial permit?"

"No, it is very easy. We always retain a physician who never asks any questions, but writes out the burial permit according to our instructions. No, we never give the correct name, but assume any we wish. I seldom know who my patients are. If a patient dies she is buried under the name she gave me. In the Potter's Field? Certainly. It is as easy to get a burial permit for a woman as for a child."

I promised to take the baby to Mrs. Stone the next day, and to sign a paper to the effect that I would never inquire after the child after the time I gave her $50 to dispose of it.

A MONEY-MAKING TRAFFIC.

The next advertisement was that of a man who proclaimed himself "ladies' physician," in Sixteenth street. He advertised under the name of Morgan, but the plate on the door bore the name of Dr. Clarke. However, I asked for Dr. Morgan and was told that he was in. The general appearance of the house bespoke good business. Dr. Morgan grew very confidential when he found that I would not hesitate at any price, so the child was taken out of my hands. I had by this time a very tender feeling for this imaginary child. I had lessened its age, as most of them complained that it was too old, and I had changed its complexion. I had long ceased to pretend it was my own. It now belonged to a friend of mine. This was a more comfortable position for us. My mind pictured it one of those handsome, dimpled baby boys we read about, and I occasionally felt a fond surprise that the mother could part with it. One's imagination is a wonderful thing when one once gives way to it.

"What becomes of all the babies?" I asked earnestly.

"Most of them die," he replied, "and those that live are given to women who advertise that they will take them. What becomes of them then, no one knows. They procure full surrender and so no one has the right to ask. Or it is very easy to say that some one adopted the child, but they don't know such. It all depends on the mother. If she is willing to spend money she can get a home for it.

"Only eight out of every ten who advertised as medicated, vapor, electric or any sort of baths were in the habit of taking children for money considerations. What do they do with them? is a question unanswerable. I say all the entire year does not bring them a slack week. Of course the majority of children die, but is it supposable that there are rich families enough to be adopting only without ceasing? Every one is not only the rich adopt the babes. It is only the rich, then the supply must be greater than the demand.

The gentleman who wrote to THE WORLD said that his wife called on Mrs. Gray in Sixth avenue, who advertises manicure and vapor baths, and some there she found that the house was filled with mothers and babies. I climbed two flights of narrow, dirty stairs and saw Mrs. Gray, who said she would take the baby on full surrender only, for $50. She said the mother could never know what became of the child afterwards.

AFRAID OF DISCOVERY.

"I get lots of children, but one has to be careful, as there are so many schemers going around. I had a woman come here the other day that acted as if she were a detective. I gave her no information. One never knows when they will get caught up."

Mrs. Gray then brought an infant from an inner room and showed it to me. As I grew liberal with my price she grew more confidential, and throughout the interview she displayed a shrewdness and a fear of betraying something.

"I had a woman come to me one day and say that her husband threatened to leave her if she did not part with a child she had previous to her marriage. She got me to take the child and put it in a home. She paid me well and said the child's board, visiting it every week, while the husband thought she did not know where it was. It is now seventy years old. Burial permits are easy to get. I retain a reputable physician and he never asks any questions. Where do all the babies go? Why, rich people adopt them, of course." [illegible] promises her the baby gave a fifty-dollar bill, and I was never to know anything of it afterwards.

DR. MAY, ... graduate of University, Philadelphia, Pa., 25 years' expert ... skillful, safe treatment, one interview sufficient ... consultation strictly private.

I called on Dr. May and I really thought the man was insane. In order to inspire us with confidence he told of the most criminal actions. He reading consent did to take charge of the child for the medical sum of $300, and he told us he could not be asked to do anything that he would refuse. He showed us diplomas from ... New York and also a Philadelphia medical college. He also said he belonged to the Board of Health and was a member in good standing in the Masonic lodge. Notwithstanding all this, he confessed to the most criminal actions, and when we started to go he asked me if I had any money with me. I said no, and then he begged that I give him, all but 25 cents, to return his services. I shudder when I think of what a horrible creature he is, according to his own confession, yet see the position that at least he claims to hold.

"A physician is bound not to reveal the secrets of his patients," he said. "Once I was taken to court in a divorce case. It was just another story of a jealous husband and a pretty wife in love with her physician, but I refused to reveal anything, and the man lost his case. An insurance company also took me up on a case where a man died of heart disease. I treated him for it, but I would not tell, and so the company was the loser. Women always trust me. They know that once they put me I'm bound not to tell on them."

CHILDREN ADOPTED FOR A PURPOSE.

LADIES can confidentially consult Mrs. E. Gollas, ladies' physician, West 29th st.

Mrs. Gollas was at home and ready to be consulted. She would take the child for $50.

always have children taken away by the time they are a day old. It is a great deal of trouble to have several-months-old babies adopted. Why? Women want to pass the babies for their own so they get them young. I have had women come from France and Germany to adopt a child. They have had property that depended on an heir, and they wanted to cheat other relatives out of it, and so buy a child. Customers always say what complexion they want the babe. I think they are all such people who take the children. I wonder what would poor people want with them? I never knew anything about the child afterward. The charitable homes where infants are taken, are horrible places. Last summer at one asylum the babes died by the hundreds. I know a physician who gives burial permits for infants or adults who die in my house. The most seldom, if ever, keep their children. A short ago a woman gave up her babe, and the physician who adopted it told me accidentally that they had bought a home on Long Island and from what I told the woman, and strange as it may seem, had bought their home from her father who was a farmer, and would be her neighbor, though she never knew it. So you see the woman can get a child every day."

I visited the New York Foundling Asylum, Sixty-eighth street, near Third avenue. The sister at the desk kept attending to her finger nails while I was talking to her. I will only make a few comments with the mother. If she gives us the child she never sees or hears from it again. We take full surrender and no one can know what they go."

As I left the asylum I met sixty-two girls in dresses and 100 boys in line, crossing Lexington avenue. I do not know where they were from or their orphanage was stamped on them.

NELLIE B[illegible]