# WHERE CAN A GIRL, ALONE IN CITY, FIND ASSISTANCE?

## Second Day's Experiences of a Young Woman in Quest of Shelter and Work in the Great City Told to Evening World Readers.

If a young woman coming to New York to make her way in the world finds herself stranded in the great city, what shall she do? To whom shall she go for assistance, and what kind of assistance will be offered to her? This question was asked in The Evening World on Saturday, and a reporter told of her efforts to obtain shelter and employment. It was pointed out that there should be some institution that is neither a working girls' home nor a "mission," not a woman's hotel, not an employment agency, but a place where a girl, ordinarily self-supporting but out of work for the time, could be boarded and given practical help in her search for new employment.

As things are, a self-dependent girl has no place to turn if for any reason her income is cut off. A girl falls ill, her employers fail, or something else throws her out of work, and she has to face the hardest situation that a great metropolis has in store for its unfortunates. A man in a similar situation can get along almost any way; but a girl, for whom one demands a certain standard of environment, what is she to do?

She tells no one so long as pride conquers need; but when her want becomes too urgent to conceal longer she finds that there is no place where she can ask for help that is fit or willing to receive her. The only institutions that could be supposed to aid her will wish to send her out of the city to friends or relatives. Her status seems to be akin to that of the immigrant who is deported to prevent his becoming a public charge.

To-day The Evening World reporter continues her description of her efforts to obtain aid and work. Has any other young woman who earns her living had similar experiences?

### BY EMMELINE PENDENNIS.

I told the readers of The Evening World on Saturday how I had visited the Y. W. C. A. for help and guidance, and how the one remedy reiterated to me at that really worthy institution was to return home at once.

A few nights later I went to the Charity Organization Society and asked for shelter for the night, explaining that I had only 20 cents, which was insufficient to pay for lodgings. A kindly looking man proceeded to cross-examine me.

"How long have you been in New York?"

"Six weeks."

"Have you any friends here?"

"None."

"How did you happen to come to the city?"

The story was drawn from me in reticent monosyllables. I said I had come to the city from Syracuse more than a month ago with the intention of setting here permanently and supporting myself by teaching or any other work I could get. I found a position with a publishing house, from which I was peremptorily dismissed along with the other newcomers. I soon ran out of cash and had to vacate my room.

"The landlady has my trunk of clothes as security for the rent I owe her. I cannot go back to her to-night. She has no place for me," I said.

My hearer received my story with evident sympathy.

"We can arrange for you to-night," he said, "since you have money I can send you to a fifteen-cent lodging-house. What we can do for you to-morrow I am not sure. With whom did you live in Syracuse?"

"With an uncle."

"Have you no parents?"

"No; they are dead."

"Is your uncle in a position to help you?"

"Ye-e-e-s."

"But you do not want him to know, of course. People get in trouble, from which they cannot extricate themselves, but still they do not want people who can help them to know of the difficulty. Why did you leave home? Did you run away?"

"No."

"Are you married?"

"No."

"Maybe, so much the better, you are probably much better off than if you had married."

Considering that I had given my name as Miss Blank Constance Brown—this seemed something of a bunch of good faith.

"Why did you leave home? You were living with your uncle. Did you keep house for him?"

"Yes. I managed things for him."

"Were you entirely dependent on him?"

"No. I taught in a private school, and paid board to my uncle and provided for all my other wants."

"Then why in heaven's name did you leave home?"

"It is hard to explain. My uncle and I were frequently at odds. You see, I was in no way dependent on him. The service I rendered him and the board I paid him were sufficient return for my keep. I felt that I earned my personal liberty, but my uncle was constantly trying to make me feel that I was a burden to him. I felt that I was a burden to my friends in an adequate way upon the small salary I was earning."

"Ah! I see. But can you not ask these friends for help, if not your uncle? Would none of them assist you?"

"Ye-e-e-es. But I cannot let them know. They must never hear that I have come here and failed; and I will not fail if only I can find work."

Then I was told, as I had been before, that even if I found work I would not be paid in advance; that was not business; and that no public institution or private person would be willing to provide for me in that period intervening.

"I strongly advise you to telegraph at once to your uncle, or any one else you please," I was told.

"You are not willing to? Well, then, all I can do for you is to give you this card, and tell you to come back in the morning. The place I am sending you to is a lodging-house for women. You will find a clean night's lodging in a house where none but respectable women are admitted. I know the matron of the house, and she is a very careful woman. You will be given a bed for 15 or 20 cents for the night. There are six beds in a room for 20 cents, and more in the cheaper rooms. I tell you this in order that you may gauge your expenditure by the amount you have with you."

A card was given to me bearing the printed address, "Women's Lodging-House, No. 4 Rivington street." I also received careful explanation about getting there, and these parting instructions:

#### He Wants the Truth.

"Now, my child, you go down there for the night and come back here early in the morning. I will make a note of your having called, and in the morning you can tell your story to ladies who will be here. I strongly advise you to keep back nothing—to tell them only the truth."

It is curiously humorous that while I was telling a tale of pure fiction I strongly resented this implication of concealing the whole truth. The force of what he suspected and the restraint necessary to keep from giving him the lie was too much for me. Instead of saying, "I haven't eloped, and I'm not in love with any one," I took refuge in that feminine fortification against attack—two tears in each eye no more. They did the work, however, and I received a very kind offer of money, which I refused with due gratitude.

That night "Miss Brown" did not unearth the mysteries of the Women's Lodging-House. A day or so ago I rented a bed for 15 cents on the top floor of No. 4 Rivington street. It was about 9 o'clock at night, and most of the beds were engaged and already occupied.

My own place was up four flights of bare stone stairway. The entire top story of this building forms one large sleeping-room, containing some twenty-nine beds arranged in rows with a small wooden wardrobe adjoining each bed. Each woman was provided with a key to this closet, and can be sure her clothing and little personal property are safe until morning.

The place was a dreary sight for any woman. The room was clean; the beds were iron cots, with clean bedclothing, and the lavatories at either end of the long room were well cared for. But it was as cheerless and bare as utilitarianism can make it.

Its aim, to be a place where a homeless woman could find a clean bed, was well fulfilled. At the same time it is not a place to send a young woman used to other ways of life.

#### Lodgers of Experience.

The sleepers in the cots were all women well past youth, a somewhat significant fact. They were domestics out of work, workers in sweatshops, button-hole makers, shirt-makers. There were white-haired women, forlorn hags, and women prematurely word and old. They slept with the bed clothes pulled high about their heads and some of their outer garments spread over them for extra warmth. Their heavy breathing bespoke a restful sleep after deep fatigue, but it jarred upon one strangely. Some of the women had colds, and their coughing form time to time roused their fellows, who moved restlessly in their sleep. A nervous hand plucking at the bed clothes and a tossing head told of a troubled mind.

Now and then late-comers entered and prepared for bed in careless fashion. The undergarments of these homeless women and the extreme simplicity of their undressing struck a deep, pathetic note.

As for ventilation in the room, there was none. There were windows at both ends of the room, but I could not discover if they were open. The air was close and oppressive. The other sleepers, I imagine, did not find it in the least disagreeable. They were of that social caste that refuses to sacrifice a few degrees of temperature for fresh air. But the air was sickening for people used to sleeping in well-ventilated chambers.

It seemed to me that any girl, homeless and friendless, must have abnormal Spartan courage if she could pass a night there among these poor, unfortunate creatures and not be sternally cramped with a sense of hopelessness and gloom. The women could be so different from herself except in the fundamentals of poverty and misfortune. For those lodgers were mostly women who had lived through soul-breaking experiences of life.

The matron herself said that she admitted no one that showed traces of guilt, or gave evidence of drinking. These were the only bars sinister. Past history or mode of life could not, of course, be investigated. Sobriety was the sole criterion of fitness. A place with such a promiscuous clientele could not be advised for a well-brought-up young woman; she is clearly out of place there.

#### Organization Not to Blame.

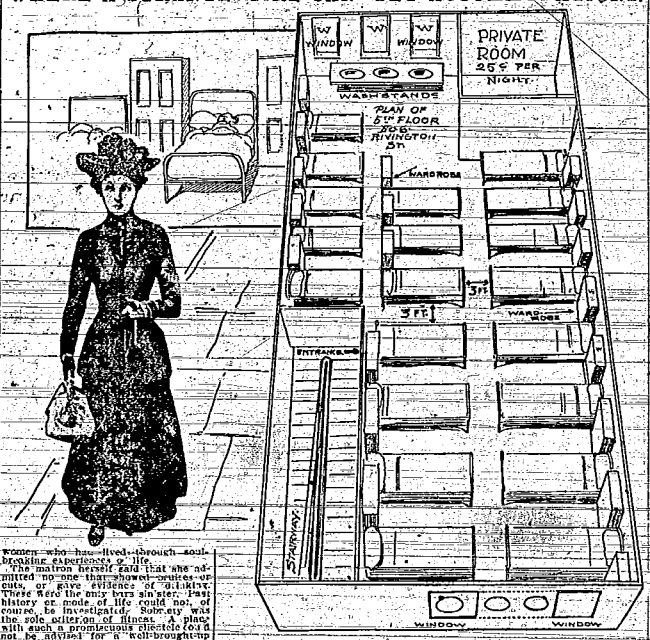
The Charity Organization Society is not necessarily to blame for recommending such a place to a refined girl. She could not, it seems, expect to be singled out from the common run of applicants for charity and demand treatment different from the common lot of the proletariat. It was imperative to dispose of the girl for the night, and she was sent to what may have been the only place where a charity worker representative would be sure of her safety. At the same time conditions are at fault when a nice girl in need of temporary assistance is subjected to such coarseness of environment.

There is evidently a need for a distinctly new charity—one for the alleviation of the condition of refined women in want. The evils caused by the non-existence of such an institution are only too easily imagined. That hundreds of nice girls have been ruined only because they had no such place where they could rightly apply for help is an unpleasant certainty. It is easy to see how a girl in financial straits could fall into bad hands in her search for relief.

Then, were reflections forced upon one after this new experience.

"Go away from New York; go home," or go to a 15-cent lodging-house seemed to be the alternatives in my quest for aid and work in the great metropolis.

### WHERE A STRANGE GIRL CAN GET ACCOMMODATIONS.




## THEY SEEK AND FIND.

In yesterday's Sunday World there were 3,201 separate advertisements. For "Want" advertisements more than twelve pages were needed. These are the brief and interesting messages which people send to each other, and they seek, of course, the medium of great city circulation.