

"That morning's experience was a baptism of fire. Deserted were the laboratory and the academic work of the college. I never returned to them. On my way from the sick room to my comfortable student quarters my mind was intent on my own responsibility. To my inexperience it seemed certain that conditions such as these were allowed because people did not *know*, and for me there was a challenge to know and tell. When early morning found me still awake my naïve conviction remained that if people knew things—and 'things' meant everything implied in the condition of this family—such horrors would cease to exist, and I rejoiced that I had had a training in the care of the sick that in itself would give me an organic relationship to the neighbourhood in which this awakening had come."

Within a day or two Miss Wald and Miss Mary Brewster, a comrade from the training school, had settled on their plan of action. "We were to live in the neighbourhood as nurses, identify ourselves with it socially, and, in brief, contribute to it our citizenship. That plan contained in embryo all the extended and diversified social interests of our Settlement group to-day."

Under the guidance of two men well acquainted with the district they started out to scour the streets for "To let" signs. One which seemed to Miss Wald worth investigating was discarded by her two newly-acquired friends with the explanation that it was in the "red light" district, and would not do. The term then meant nothing to her, though later she was to know much of the unfortunate women who inhabit the quarter. Ultimately they took possession of a top floor of

a house in Jefferson Street in September, 1893, which possessed the rare advantage of a bath tub. It was sunny and bright; and the janitress in the basement a treasure. Naturally the objections of friends as to two young women living alone in New York under these conditions had to be met. Miss Wald goes on to say: "Any pride in the sacrifice of material comfort which might have risen within us was effectually inhibited by the

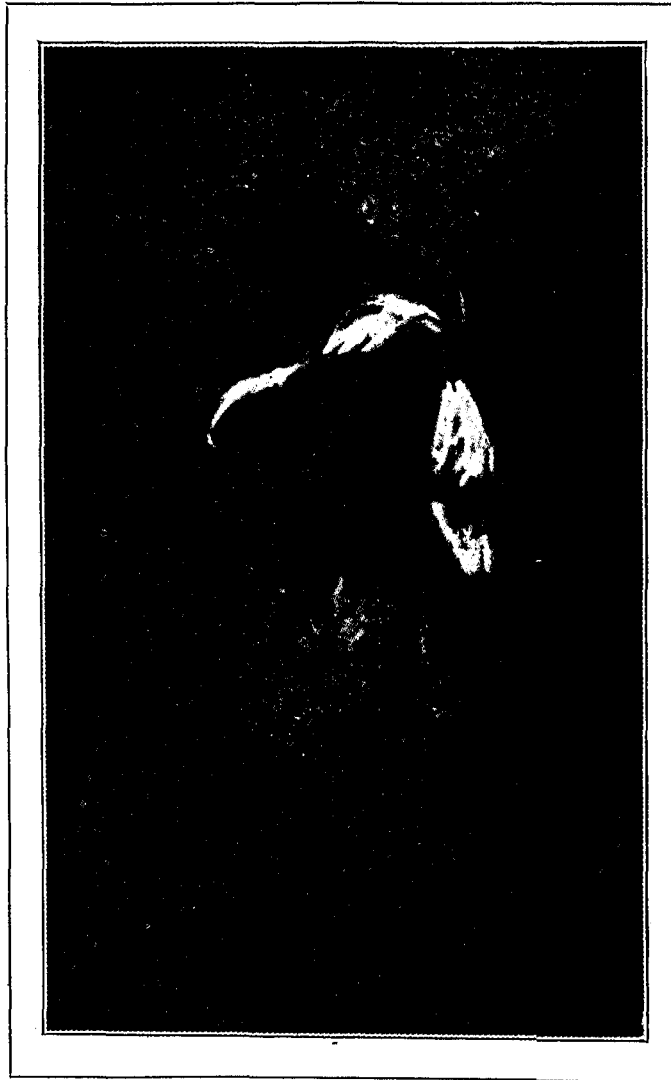
constant reminder that we two young persons occupied exactly the same space as the large families on every floor below us, and to one of our basement friends at least we were luxurious beyond the dreams of ordinary folk."

A little lad from the basement, the first invited guest, who shared a simple, but appetising dinner cooked by Miss Brewster, while Miss Wald set the table, rushed down to his mother with bulging eyes and reported, "them ladies live like the Queen of England, and eat off solid gold plates."

Once the friends were established in their tenement flat, work for the public welfare came to them, through contact with their poorer neighbours, easily and naturally, and, from small beginnings, have arisen the many branches of social work now associated with the Henry Street Settlement, to which

a move was made in 1895. The consideration of the poor for their dead is illustrated by the story of Mrs. McRae, who, when her roving husband died, placed on the casket his tobacco and pipe, and ordered the procession to pass his tenement home twice before driving to the cemetery, "So he'd not think we were not for forgivin' him, and hurryin' him away."

Still more pathetic is the story of the mother,



ESTHER.

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