WITH the "Y.W.C.A. LADY" at the UNION STATION.

HUMOR AND PATHOS MINGLED IN LONELY PASSENGERS PROTECTED BY PORTLAND'S TRAVELERS' AID SOCIETY

THE "Y.W.C.A. LADY" AT HER DESK.

STRODE INTO THE STATION WITH A HILARIOUS BABY.

LOOKING FOR HULDA

UNION STATION

BY ANNA MYNOTT DOCKING.

A most interesting stage on which to see real living bits of tragedy and comedy is the Union Station, Portland. There are stray sketches from life that start laughter and tears of a kind too deep for the play behind the footlights with its tinsel and paint. If you ever want to forget the goblins of care and worry that are trying "to git you if you don't watch out," and get so interested in other folks' lives that you can't remember you have one of your own, just spend an evening with the "Y. W. C. A. Lady," who is an important personage in many of the passing scenes.

"I'm looking for Hulda and must not miss seeing her," remarked the Travelers' Aid secretary, as she sat at her desk in the waiting-room putting on her badge and glancing over telegrams, letters and memoranda about people to be looked after.

Questions about who Hulda might be brought to light a pleasing little romance. A young Swede woodsman, strong, straight and sound as the pines and firs among which he worked had come to see her a few weeks ago. In tangled English and Swede, with happy embarrassment, he told that his sweetheart was coming to live in the little cabin he had built out in the woods. She would make the long journey all alone to join him and he would be ready to meet her. But if by any chance she should come when he was away would the Lady take care of Hulda? There was serious international conference over plans and then he had asked for a card of the Y. W. C. A. Travelers' Aid to send across the sea. He was not here yet and probably she would come tonight.

Convoying a Baby.

A leisure half hour gave time for gossip about happenings at the station. The secretary laughed right merrily as she showed a letter from a theatrical couple playing in a stock company in Chicago. They had left the baby with a grandmother near Portland, but found it impossible to longer stand the separation. Could the Y. W. C. A. find some one coming to Chicago who would bring the child? There were consultations with the grandmother which ended in a message that a young uncle was returning next day to his university work and would take the baby if some lady going on the same train would help look after the youngster. A canvass of the waiting-room found a pretty young school ma'am who was going on that train. She laughingly declined financial inducements offered but cheerfully agreed to look after the baby. Accompanied by the grandmother, the athletic uncle strode into the station with a hilarious 20-months-old boy on his shoulder and was introduced to his assistant. The child's sublime faith that his bottle would be forthcoming when due could not be shaken even when it developed that neither of his guardians knew whether oyster cocktails or castoria were the proper rations for him en route. After directions that would fill columns of "Helps to Mothers," the party departed speeded by gay laughter of their friends and anxious admonitions from the grandmother. The baby turned to give a mischievous wink with both eyes to the Y. M. C. A. Lady. He has not written his memoirs yet so no one knows the tale he could tell. The uncle reported a fine trip but failed to go into details, but there has been a rumor that wedding cards are to be expected soon.

Saving a Girl From Hell.

Tales between whiles were interrupted by a telegram from a conductor on a train: "No proof, but suspect girl running away. Some one meet her." A policeman was taken into confidence for any needed help and the Y. W. C. A. lady was beside the train to catch the conductor's nod when the girl, hardly more than a child, stepped off. Showing her badge she offered assistance in finding friends or helping make connections. "No," the girl said. She had come to visit friends near Portland and the man of the family where she was going would be there to meet her and take her home. "There he is now," she added, pointing to a man standing near the gate who had a wholesome country look that allayed suspicion. The policeman was close by and talked with the stranger who told the same story, gave his name and address and showed letters to prove his identity. All looked fair. The conductor must have been mistaken. The man said they were going to take the next car, which would go in a half hour, to his home, and they started away. Hardly were they out of sight before a frantic telegram came from the girl's father. The secretary and the Chief of Police held hurried conference over the phone and special officers were detailed for the search. The woman snatched her hat and coat and rushed away with the officer who had talked with the man. There were 20 strenuous moments of effort to save the girl before a message came that the runaways had been found on a streetcar and taken to the police station. The Y. W. C. A. Lady waited only to telegraph the father before going to get the girl, who threw herself, with wild sobs, into the arms of her rescuer and was taken at once to the shelter of the Y. W. C. A. home.

Some telephoning between the father and the Chief disclosed the fact that the same man had lured an older daughter to ruin only a short time before.

Arrival of Hulda.

A train was announced as the secretary again entered the depot and she took her usual place near the door through which the travelers came. Among the last was a pink-cheeked, flaxen-haired girl who looked anxiously about. Each plump arm hugged a bundle and in one hand was a bit of pasteboard. She spied the yellow badge and ran to its wearer holding out the card.

"Hulda?" smilingly questioned the watcher and the girl answered with vigorous nods and blushes and eager foreign words.

In the throng was a frail wisp of a woman, well past the allotted three-score and ten, who came with trembling steps through the gateway, piloted by a couple of passengers from the same train into the keeping of the Y. W. C. A. Lady. She was a lost leaf who had outlived all her kin and was journeying to old friends in Washington who would give her a place by their fireside. But her train did not go till tomorrow afternoon. What could she do? No others needing attention the aged wayfarer and the girl were made comfortable in the waiting-room until they could be taken to headquarters.

Spoiled a Divorce.

Off in a corner sat a pretty young woman holding a year-old boy, rollicking with the joy of living. From the changing expressions of face, one fancied she might be having trouble with herself. Snatching up the child, she went over to the telegraph office a minute, then came to the Y. W. C. A. lady with the defiant announcement: "I've wired his sister where we are, maybe he'll come. He can get here an hour before my train." The girl was leaving her husband, and going back to her folks. She had started soon after he went to work that morning, "because he had been drinking and that was enough to break any woman's heart. During the long wait this tale of woe had been confided to women around her, and they had sympathized in impulsive feminine fashion. The Y. W. C. A. had become interested and won an unconscious confession of spoiled girl tantrums that might drive any man except a wooden Indian or a scarecrow to distraction, and also brought to light the fact that he had never "been drinking" before. "That is a serious matter," angrily asserted the girl.

"Yes," said the wise little secretary, "but it is even more serious for you to break up your home. You'd better go back to your husband."

"I'll not do it. He'll just be crazy without me and the baby."

As time went on she began to wonder if she wanted to run away. He might not come after her. There were other girls. Then she sent the telegram. By and by an honest-faced, impetuous boy came, but domestic hostilities were so strenuous that Cupids face grew long, his wings drooped and he might have fled the field had it not been for the backing of the Y. W. C. A. lady, who was pressed into service as umpire. It took diplomatic skill worthy of a Prime Minister to restore peace. One of the chief grievances seemed to be a phonograph that the girl insisted on playing every minute the man was in the house, because he hated it so. By way of concession, he got some new records for that diabolical machine before they took a train back to the deserted little home.

Shopkeeper Pro Tem.

An old Italian woman was among the incoming travellers. Bewildered and distressed, she wandered through the station, looking for some one while the secretary tried to find an interpreter. A red cap man joined in the quest, but it happened that no one of her race was within reach. The Consul was phoned to, but he was out of town, and his wife sick. With coaxing gestures the guardian of womankind persuaded the frightened creature to accompany her a little way up street to a small oyster and chophouse kept by an Italian, who sometimes gave aid in such emergencies. The woman told her troubles to her countryman, and he said he would take her to his home nearby and find her friends later if he could only leave the shop. To take care of the woman or the business was the question before the secretary, and she promptly settled it by offering to run the shop if he would only hurry back. Her sense of humor stood by her; so did circumstances. But one customer came. They held a protracted conversation, each in his own tongue and without understanding a word the other said. Then the chophouse lady pro tem. invited him with many and varied gestures to be seated and wait till the head of the establishment and the cook combined came back. The man evidently felt that it was up to him to watch this strange Americano, and looked as if he feared foul play. When the proprietor returned there was an explanation and laughter, in which the woman joined as she hurried back to the station.

Waybilling a Ten-Year-Old.

A brakeman was waiting for her with a little 10-year-old motherless maid, who had been living with her grandmother on a ranch in California. Her father had sent for her now to go to him in Seattle. In her pocketbook were a ticket, a little money and directions telling her to go to a hotel and then take the boat tomorrow. The child had never seen anything bigger than a village before, and the Y. W. C. A. lady might have gasped if she were not so used to the hazardous way in which folks start children out alone. Just last week she had taken under her wing a 6-year-old girl who had been sent to get her baby brother and take him to Spokane. So she simply took the father's address to write him of the dangers by the way, and to let her know as soon as the child reached home, and then added the little one to her group of charges in the waiting-room.

Stopped Too Often.

It seemed to be old ladies' night. Nine of them got off one train, and during the evening there were 15 to be looked after. "We usually have an epidemic of some one thing," laughed the watcher as a conductor brought to her a merry old soul on crutches, who had never been on a train before. She took hold of the secretary's badge, saying, "They told me if I saw a lady with a piece pinned on her she would take care of me." When told that she would have to wait awhile for her train, she exclaimed, disgustedly: "There! Just as I expected. They kept stopping at places and people getting on and off. If they'd come right along I'd been here in time for an earlier train." She kept a number of fellow travelers laughing while the Y. W. C. A. woman looked after another old lady who had forgotten where she was going. She had money tied up in her handkerchief for a ticket, but there was nothing in her handbag to tell the destination. She said, however, that there was a letter from the daughter to whom she was going in her trunk and they went off to the baggage-room to find it. Then a message was sent to the Travelers' Aid secretary at her next stopping place to look after her.

Her Bad Boy.

But in the rush of old ladies there was a bit of tragedy that brought tears to the eyes of women and made the men who saw it feel like swearing or fighting. A sweet-faced grandmother, of the old-fashioned type now almost extinct, sat apart dazed with heart-breaking grief. Huddled up beside her was a fine-looking, well-dressed man asleep from drink. He was a son whom she had not seen for 12 years. In response to his loving urging she had come to visit him and he had met her here, where a change was to be made, but while waiting for her train he had also met some friends. Stunned by the shock, she knew little of what was said to her while her ticket was found and her berth engaged. With pitiful efforts she roused the man beside her when told the train was coming and he staggered out with the baggage. His submerged manliness came to the surface while the Y. W. C. A. lady was tenderly helping his mother on the train and he tried to thank her for the kindness.

A brief lull gave time for some funny stories about big families looked after that might relieve Theodore Roosevelt's anxiety about race suicide, and also for a glance over the mail. There was a grateful letter from a derelict girl found in the station and held onto until she was lured into a decent life. She could not go back to the little town from which she came. Her aged parents must not know. They believed her to be working for a family. So a place had been found for her here. The letter file was bulging with gratitude of wayfarers who had been guarded and helped. Many of them were from foreign girls and the quaint medley of words had to be almost translated to an outsider.

Had Daughters of His Own.

This was interrupted for a tour of the waiting-room that spoiled the pastime of a man whose gray hairs and face lined by years testified that he was old enough to know better. But they do say that when the microbe of "mashing" once gets into the system it is liable to last as long as life. The attraction was two little country maids who showed symptoms of never having been away from home before. They sat happily munching apples and fearlessly enjoying this glimpse of the world, to them "a story without end, each maid a heroine, each man a friend." The man pacing back and forth near them offered his knife for peeling purposes and it was accepted with frank smiles. With each round of his beat he paused to ask questions about their home, journey and other matters. A bright man of affairs, tarrying to make connection, was asking the Y. W. C. A. lady what kind of work the association did at the depot, but while she chatted with him her alert eyes were watching the girls. She stepped up to learn their destination and assure them she would see that they got on the right train. The manner of the man as he listened made her add as she turned away with a friendly smile, "I wouldn't talk to strange men." Some of the travelers near gave each other understanding glances, but the man was not to be so easily suppressed and dropped into a seat beside the girls to get acquainted. The secretary quietly tendered the little bit of information: "These girls are under my care." Listeners wore smiles of amusement. "I guess you don't know who I am," stormed the man. "No," was the low response, while the woman's face flushed with distaste for a scene, "and it does not matter in the least who you are."

"I'm a superintendent of schools," he sputtered, producing letters to identify himself. "I have daughters of my own."

"If you have you would not want strange men talking to them," was the reply.

He complained loudly to fellow travelers about a gentleman's being insulted like that and people not tending to their own business, but the looks with which they listened could hardly be considered sympathetic. "Well, I'm seeing things," remarked the man talking to the secretary. "I'm for the association, for I, too, have daughters of my own."

Bedtime at Last.

The last train in, and every child, girl and woman cared for, the Y. W. C. A. lady started for home with her guests. A cabman who had lingered hoping for a fare noticed the little company and stopped his horses. He knew the secretary, as they all do, and no president of a railroad is treated with more deference from the highest official down to the lowest janitor. Isn't she under the self-appointed protection of every man connected with any railroad?

"If you'll get in I'll take the whole crowd to the association just for good luck," he called.

A city clock was striking 2 when they paused in the hall to examine the little bulletin board that told what rooms were waiting for any stray travelers. Soon the old lady, the Swede girl and the child were tucked away in warm beds, and the "Y. W. C. A. Lady" went to her own room, where the run-away girl sobbed in her sleep.

Choosing Hats for Children.

In choosing a Winter hat for the little girl, let the mother be careful that it is very light. Often children wear heavy hats that are uncomfortable and unhealthful, yet in their ignorance they are not able to explain exactly what is the matter. This is especially true with younger children, who cannot explain the reason for their discomfort, yet feel the discomfort just the same.

Take just as much care in selecting the felt hat for the youngster in regard to weight as you do in regard to style, and the child will be more comfortable and happy. Many cases of nervousness have been caused by disregard for the child's comfort while she or he is yet too young to complain.

Erin Mavourneen.

New York Sun.

(Written on beholding Ireland after an absence of many years.)

Glory to God, but it's sweet to behold thee,
Erin Mavourneen, pulse of my heart!
Fondly again to my breast to enfold thee,
Lowly and poor and enslaved as thou art!
Ah, the deep pleasure—the joy beyond measure,
After the long years of absence and pain
To clasp to my bosom my soul's dearest treasure,
And see the smile dawn in thy sad eyes again!

Long have I pined for this moment of meeting—
Long have I sorrowed for thee o'er the main!
Mine is a love neither shallow nor fleeting—
Queen of my heart thou shalt evermore reign!
It may be tomorrow may bring thee new sorrow,
For thou hast a jealous and merciless foe;
But I shall be near thee to comfort and cheer thee
And guard and revere thee through weal and through woe!

Across the wide ocean, to claim my devotion,
There dwells a young maiden, entrancing and grand;
Lately we parted in fervent emotion—
Thrilling the touch of her lingering hand!
But thou art the nearest and fondest and dearest—
Thou art the love that my infancy knew!
Fate hath decreed thee a life the severest—
Erin, my darling, to thee I'll be true!