

THE PAUPER

By Samuel Hippler



ONE OF THE OLDEST INMATES
AGED 93-



THE ONE LEGGED
LEAD PENCIL MAN

THE American pauper is probably the queerest combination on earth. He is a mixture of thrift and laziness, only equaled by that of the New England farmer who spent three hours looking for the trained family dog in order that the beast might save him the labor of carrying a small package half a mile.

A well-known student of economic questions and conditions is authority for the assertion that nearly three-fourths of the paupers in America today are such through some fault of their own. Every locality has its characters that go to the county poorhouse every fall, living a life of ease and luxury during the winter months, only to disappear in spring, when they could partially compensate the commonwealth for their winter's lodging by working in the fields that surround nearly every such institution.

Specifically, a pauper is a destitute person entitled to receive aid under the law. Generally speaking, however, the term pauper has been stretched to take in all that numerous class who live by their wits and are not criminals. The beggar who spends three or four months of the year in a prison or penitentiary as a tramp is just as much a pauper in the general sense as the deserted wife and child, who are left a charge upon the commonwealth by some drunken rot of a husband and father. It is in the broader sense of the word, then, that this article is written partially because it enables the writer to cover the topic in a more comprehensive way and partly because the real picturesque figures in pauperdom are found among the individuals who do not come under the classification in its strictest sense.

If the average pauper spent the same amount of time and energy improving himself that he does in inventing means to live without work he would occupy one of those pinnacles of fame toward which ordinary mortals but gaze with unattained longing. In the summer months life without work is comparatively easy to find, but in the cold of winter this life of ease does not exist outside the walls of the nation's penal institutions. Police reporters and members of the police force in large cities are thoroughly familiar with the efforts of tramps to get locked up as fall wanes into winter, and many a big copper has the laugh on some shivering hobo when he refuses to take him in.

Old Tom King of Buffalo, for 16 years a police justice and himself a pauper,

asked the judge of the policeman who had brought him in? I just let him go.

"Sure, Judge," said Cassidy, "he just fired a stone through a window of the saloon across the street."

"Sixty days," said the judge. The tramp had won.

The paper that gives the authorities the greatest amount of trouble is the professional pauper—the man who is a pauper in order to make a livelihood. These fellows are usually the most vicious of their class, and will seldom hesitate at crime. About nine months of the year they beg and steal—the other three they recuperate their bodies and their wits in some convenient almshouse or penitentiary. As opposed to these are the professional beggars, who are different only in that they escape the real pauper class by never going to an almshouse, and by being generally honest—if getting along by means of trumped-up stories and fake injuries can be called honest.

While making a study of the pauper and beggar question I had occasion to watch a criminal pauper or only the beggar class, I approached him. He began to elude up to me, but I beat him to it as the saying goes, and before he had a chance to begin his appeal I said in my most insinuating tone:

"Give us a dime for a bed, Cul."

"He stied me up with a sidelong glance, and my makeup must have looked some characteristic of the beggar masonry.

"You think you're a pretty smart guy, don't you?" he said. "And maybe you think I ain't got the price of a bed to give you. Put your peepers on this."

Building his action to the word, he pulled from his pocket a handful of coins that would have done credit to a street car conductor's change bag. I grabbed. I got some of the money, but his free hand caught my wrist. It was an interesting moment. In one hand he held nearly a pint of small silver pieces. With the other he grasped the wrist of my hand that had the rest of the coin.

"Drop that dough," he said, adding a few choice epithets by way of emphasis. "Or I'll kick your head off."

"Let go of me or I'll smash you one good punch with my free hand, if it's the last thing I do, and then turn you over to that cop across the street," was my reply.

He dropped my wrist as if it had been a live coal, thus confirming my suspicion that he was of the criminal class, afraid of a policeman, and I got safely away before he discovered that there wasn't a patrolman in sight. I counted up my booty and found that I had made \$1.16.

I had the satisfaction of seeing my friend arraigned in police court a few days later charged with picking pockets.

All large cities are afflicted with the beggar plague, and most of them prove fertile fields for the men who live on the labor of others. New York has been termed the "Beggars' Paradise," and Chicago is said by some members of the fraternity to be the easiest city in the

world in which to live without work.

It would surprise you to know, perhaps, that the average professional beggar is a very close reader of the papers. He has to be. Competition is keen and progress rapid in the underworld of life, as well as in the upper realms of business and the man with the newest yarn and the most plausible tale is the man who brings in the biggest pile at night. The old stories about losing a wife and child by pneumonia are worn threadbare and will hardly bring the user in enough for a bed. To be a good beggar a man must be more up to date than his fellow-tramp. Thus it was that after the Chicago beef-packing scandals the country was flooded with men who lost the use of one or two or several limbs as the result of abuses and injuries suffered in the Chicago packing houses. Then it was the San Francisco earthquake, and survivors were blowing into eastern cities asking for help three months after the terrible disaster. Every big railroad wreck gives some enterprising hobo a chance to work the sympathetic housewives in the neighborhood towns, and a powder mill explosion, in which every man within 100 yards was killed, furnished no less than 24 survivors.

The newest racket is the automobile gag. A dusty and tattered individual staggers into a farm yard and tells a heart-rending tale about being run down by an automobilist who never even stopped to inquire how badly he had been hurt. The farmers' well known antipathy to the city automobilist is relied upon to help in the success of the gag. It usually does, and the bogus victim frequently gets several meals, a night's lodging, some serviceable cast-off clothing and a chance to work—while the latter he usually ducks.

Closely allied with the great begging profession are the men who may be termed "purveyors to the fakery." They make a business of supplying beggars with the articles needed to ply their trade, such as artificial sores to counterfeit injury or disease, bandages that will give the appearance of any desired deformity, crutches, canes, etc. etc. There is in London at least one individual who makes a good living renting out appliances. A pair of green goggles, a tin cup and a sign "I am blind," for instance, will be loaned to enterprising individuals who desire to enter the trade for a small percentage of the daily receipts. It would seem that the owner of these chattels had little security for their return, and no assurance that he would get his proper portion of the proceeds. Such is not the case, however. In big cities—and in London especially—the various localities are divided up into beats, and no man is allowed to trespass on his brother's territory. When the new individual is let into the business he is assigned to some certain corner or territory, and if he once played false the great fraternity of beggary would see that he never begged again. To such a sentence has the business been reduced that one of these purveyors can tell almost a hapenny, how much any corner will bring at a certain hour of the day for a certain kind of begging. Panhandling, for instance, generally yields 30 per cent more than "blind" begging, but then, too, it is much harder work and requires more skill and activity. Instructors in begging, too, are known to exist, though to my knowledge, the police of no big city have ever knowingly run down and held one of these dangerous citizens. For a stated sum they

will supply the "panhandler" with a tale suited to his peculiar physical makeup, and will tell him just where to put the whine to make his plea successful. In justice to the majority of this class, however, it must be said that the man who has to learn his story never makes a first-class beggar. Those who excel are those who originate their own yarns and tell them themselves.

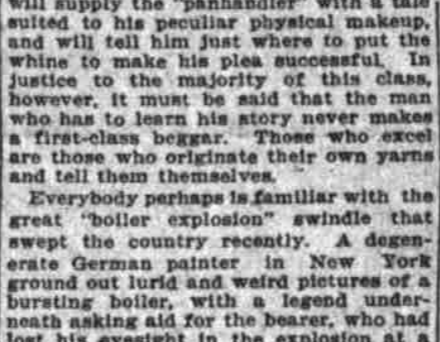
Everybody perhaps is familiar with the great "hotter explosion" swindle that swept the country recently. A degenerate German painter in New York ground out lurid and weird pictures of a bursting boiler, with a legend underneath asking aid for the bearer, who had lost his eyesight in the explosion at a chemical works in a place sufficiently distant to make investigation difficult. An Italian sold the pictures to professional beggars for \$10 each, and thousands were placed on the market. Not a city in the country but that was visited by two or three of these sign-bearers, and both the German painter and his Italian partner waxed rich, it is said, by the swindle. A western city unearthed a similar scheme, probably a revival of the old one, and killed in the bud what would have proven an equally profitable business based on the San Francisco earthquake.

Perhaps some readers with a fondness for splitting hairs will take exception to a classing of professional beggars with paupers. But there is no reason why they should; both classes are supported by the public. In the case of the beggar, the individual contributes direct, while in the case of the pauper he does it indirectly through the taxes he pays the state. No long ago the police of a western city methodically and carefully, working (the public) from 10 o'clock each morning until midnight. In this way he averaged \$15 a week and kept his wife and two children in comfort, if not in luxury.

Before the days of the telephone or telegraph many beggars would carry about a letter that purported to be signed by the mayor or some leading citizen of a nearby city, recommending the bearer as worthy of charity. In these days it would be an easy matter to verify the claim by wire, and this method has been discarded as dangerous. In its place the fake union card, however, does a good business. The panhandler is comparatively safe in his calling, too. When he is in the Ohio policy town, he can, he begs on a union card issued by an ironmolders' union in Pittsburg. How are the potters to know it is a fake card? They don't, and usually subscribe to help a union cause along to Chicago, where he expects to get work. There are many panhandlers—especially among the printers—who have genuine union cards. They have learned the trade and have gone on the "bum" later. There is no question that they are genuine union men, but they are as little deserving of sympathy as the fakery.

Religion is a fertile field for the pauper—professional and otherwise. Many individuals, and even families, join various churches in different localities and get all the "help" they can before leaving for newer and greener fields. The alum mission is a great graft for a certain branch of this ilk. The bum visits one of the revival meetings and gets religion. Great tears course down his cheeks, and his whole body soba with suppressed emotion. The minister notices him and asks him to come forward. After several unsuccessful efforts a kind brother finally aids him, and joins the throng of those who have found salvation. After the service he tells his story. He has been a tramp and drinker all his life, but from now on he will follow a narrower and better path. He is broke and hungry and really came into the mission to get warm; but he has taken his last drop of liquor. He will walk the streets all night and look for work in the morning. The kind brother is touched and offers him half a dollar. He refuses. The other insists and he accepts. The next night he is there in a front seat and enters heartily into the service.

THE WILLIAMS BROTHERS, TWINS, AGE THIRTY FOUR.



"Well, my man, did you get work?" asks the minister, kindly.

He shakes his head sadly. "My clothes are too poor," he says. "No body would give a bum looking like me work." And again the tears.

There is a conference between the minister and a few of the brothers. He gets a quarter and a slip of paper with an address on it and is told that if he calls at the number he will get clothes. Assurance that he will get work are also given him.

He wants the clothes, but not the work, and so he goes the next day, gets them, and then disappears, only to bob up serenely at some other mission and work the game again.

The paper in the almshouse is not as picturesque as the beggar in the street. Nor as interesting. There are in a certain almshouse in an eastern state, however, two brothers—John and Mike—who have been inmates for 16 years. They are twins, 34 years old, and the paternal airs that John assumes because he beat Mike into the world by 15 minutes are laughable. A visit to any almshouse will reveal a wealth of human interest that would stir the sluggish blood of almost anybody. The stories that could be told by the inmates could well be woven into the fabric of many a drama, and made the plot of many a story.

The bureau of census some time ago completed figures that show that during the year covered in the report 163,176 persons were admitted to the almshouses of the United States. Of this total 111,517 were males and 51,359 females. The figures just quoted relate only to the poor in the almshouse, and not at all to the great floating population of dependent poor and the vast army of beggars who live in the shady ruts of life, existing by money gained by questionable methods. There seems no reliable way of taking a census of this great body of the under world, and it is not likely that one will ever be devised. A great student of the poor in a recent article said that for every nine men who live in the almshouse there were one who lived by begging. If these figures hold good it means that in addition to all the residents of a city one tenth of the population must be dependent upon the charity of beggars who seldom see the light of day, plying their trade at night and sleeping when the sun is up.

The number of paupers enumerated in the almshouses in 1880 was 56,303 and in 1890 72,845. It is interesting in this connection to note that though the almshouse population has kept on increasing right along the increase has not been in proportion to the growth of the population of the country, and consequently the ratio of almshouse pauperism is decreasing. In 1880 it was 132 to every 100,000 of population and about 116 to every 100,000 in 1890. In 1902 it has been still further reduced to 101 in every 100,000, and incomplete figures at hand indicate that it is even less now.

Here is an interesting thing: there are far less females than male paupers. That this is so is strange. Men are generally regarded as the stronger sex, and many a father has said, "Well, I'm glad my child is a boy; if anything happens to me he will be better able to take care of himself than if he were a girl." The census bureau pauper figures seem to disprove this theory, however. Women, it is argued, have more pride before taking advantage of the state's offer to aid. Women, too, it is said, are more resourceful than men, more courageous when beset by difficulties. Women, too, it should be remembered, frequently have husbands to take care of them. But whatever the cause, the fact remains that there are twice as many male paupers as female ones. Although pauperism is more prevalent among the males, the chief distinction between the two sexes seems to be that the females, once having entered the almshouse, stay there, while men are, as a rule, only winter boarders. Careful investigation showed that during one year a majority of the paupers were

seasoned inmates. This seems to support the theory that almshouse paupers, like beggars, are often professionals at the game. Of the total number of paupers in the almshouse, however, it was found that 66.4 per cent were in some measure defective and really unfit for work.

An occasional glimpse at the underworld does one good. A study of the pauper question makes it easier for those of us who are able to earn our own living to bear cheerfully the burdens that have fallen on our shoulders.

DUEL IN THE DARK

Result of Strange Encounter Between Two Scouts.

Springfield correspondence. St. Louis Globe-Democrat.

A. T. Lawrence of St. Louis has been spending several days in Springfield, going over battlefields in this vicinity, with which he was quite familiar during the civil war. Lawrence wore the blue during the war and participated in the battle of Springfield. He was with his company in the old stockade on Campbell street and he tells many interesting stories of incidents that occurred during that battle.

"We wanted some one to go out from the stockade," said Mr. Lawrence, "to do some reconnoitering. There was a telegraph operator with us named Briggs, and he was the first man to volunteer. Briggs stole out from the stockade and to within 20 yards of what was then known as the city cemetery.

"A Confederate scout was hidden behind a tombstone and took a shot at Briggs just as he ducked behind a tree. It was along toward evening and the two men exchanged possibly 30 shots at each other in the duel in the darkness that followed. About 11 o'clock in the morning a truce was agreed to by the opposing forces in order to care for the wounded on both sides.

"We found the body of Briggs lying at the foot of the tree. A bullet from the squirrel rifle of the Confederate scout had penetrated his brain through the eye. The body of the Confederate was found in the cemetery in a sitting posture. His back was against a tombstone and he had one foot against another headstone, and was in the act of pulling on his boot when a Union bullet pierced his heart. His fingers were still in the boot straps and he appeared as if he had fallen asleep while pulling on his boot and was killed while asleep.

The First Oil Well.

From the Philadelphia Record.

With the death of James P. Smith, of Titusville last week there passed the last of the group of men who appears in the famous Drake well picture, taken in the autumn of 1841 by John A. Mather, the noted oil region photographer. The group in the picture included Colonel Edwin L. Drake, the man who drilled the well; William and James P. Smith, practical drillers, associated with the work; Peter Wilson, Titusville merchant and standstill friend of Colonel Drake, and Albridge Locke. The five men are dead. This picture adorns the offices of hundreds of oil operators and refiners and is the only photograph of the first oil well. The only person now living connected with the picture is John A. Mather, the photographer.

Black Larks in England.

From the Westminister Gazette.

At the last meeting of the British Entomological club three copies of the lark, who were exhibited which had been recently captured in this country.

These are the first recorded examples of Great Britain and were probably brought by stress of weather, which during January was exceptionally severe and led to the birds. The female of the lark, who keeps a strong sentimental connection to the sky later in the male, it is said, though it is secured during the winter, and in months of rusty brown tinges to the plumage.