

## WHERE I FOUND HER

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What tragedies, what joys, are constantly being enacted in a great city. And the ups and downs there are! Walk along an important thoroughfare and suddenly you come upon a wedding party just entering or just coming out of a church. Proceed still farther and you see a crowd gathered about an auto. A child has been run over and killed. Still farther you meet a starving mother with a sickly babe in her arms. A nurse trundling a child dressed in embroidered and lace garments turns the perambulator for fear her charge will be contaminated.

One bright moonlight night I was walking over a bridge. The scene was pleasing, and I paused and leaned over the rail to enjoy it. "How fine it is," I remarked to myself, "to live in a city! By day there is the excitement of people and vehicles passing and repassing, the hum of business and pleasure; by night myriads of lights, with occasionally the one great night lamp of heaven to illumine the whole."

Suddenly to my left down on the water I heard a splash. A moment later a human figure came to the surface and went down again. A boat shot under an arch, and a man in it dived and brought up a woman, and the two were hauled into the boat. A policeman ordered the boatman to pull ashore. While they were doing so I went to where he was standing. "What were you doing?" asked the policeman of the girl, who by this time showed signs of life.

"I wanted to die. Why didn't you let me alone?"  
"What's the matter?"  
"No home, nothing to do to earn a living, tired and heartsick."  
"Well, you'll have to come along with me to answer to a charge of suicide."

"Policeman," I said, "will you let me provide a carriage?"  
"I can call the patrol wagon."

An empty carriage was passing. I hailed it, and the policeman, the girl and I got in and were driven to the police station.

I must pause here in my story to tell what I afterward learned of the girl's history. Some twenty years before one passing up one of the fashionable streets of the city on a certain day and hour would have seen a party emerging from a church. A young bride and groom were starting in life with every prospect of happiness. The groom's father was head of a large business, and the son had been made junior partner on the day of his marriage. A little girl was born to the couple, and she was taken to church bundled in embroidered garments, like the child in the perambulator I have referred to, that she might be baptized. Then in a handsome stone residence there was a christening feast, with a millionaire for godfather.

That was the year before the great panic of '73, when one morning it was announced that a great business house had failed and down went the other concerns like card houses. The father and son of this story fell with the rest, the father dying of disappointment and wounded pride. The clothing of the baby girl from that moment began to grow plain, then dingy. Her father died, and her mother lived in want. The child grew to womanhood with no remembrance of her baby clothes. When her sun arose the sun of her family set. Then her mother died. The girl went from place to place begging for a situation but nobody wanted her. Then one night she stood on the bridge. The waters below said, "Come I will give you rest."

The morning after the attempted suicide I went to the courtroom where the good and the bad, the fortunate and the unfortunate were brought up before a magistrate. In her turn the girl was led in and placed in the dock. She had no defense. She simply said that she had got discouraged and, passing over the bridge on her way to her dingy room which she had been notified she must leave on the morrow, she had looked out on the brilliant scene, then down on the water, and she could not resist the call to oblivion.

The downward slide in life, though it had marred, had not destroyed her comeliness. There was evidence of an inherited refinement both in person and hearing.

Suddenly a member of the police court arose and said that there was a young man present who would marry the girl if she were willing. He was produced. The girl looked at him, then languidly gave her consent. "What could she do?"

"Judge," I said rising, "if you will send the girl to some home where she will be protected I will interest myself in her."

The judge asked the girl which plan she would prefer, and she chose my plan. She was sent to a home for indigent girls, and soon afterward I called upon the matron and got her charge's story as I have given it here.

I looked up some of those who had known her parents, but found there some were dead, some were very poor, was no one to take an interest in her, and the children of those who had kept in touch with the upper stratum had no use for the children of those who had gone down. What was to be done for her I must do myself. I followed the example of the young man who had offered to marry her. I could do nothing for her in any other way. She consented, not languidly, as she had done with the other, but gladly.

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