THE AGENT AT THE DOOR.

It was a warm July morning, so warm that I felt a throb of pity for cooks and laundresses as I sat down in my shady west room and opened my desk to begin my morning task. I had scarcely taken my pen from the rack when I heard the click of the front gate, and, glancing out, saw a grey-haired woman with a shabby, red, velvet bag upon her arm.

"An agent," I said, impatiently, to myself, as I went to answer her ring at the door. She held out a scrap of folded paper, saying nothing herself. As I took it I made swift mental comment: "Worse than an agent—a beggar. I wonder how many husbands she has had killed in a mine explosion and how many small orphans there are to be transported east to their friends?"

But no, it proved to be a note from my neighbor in the next block, a hasty pencil scrawl, written in her own characteristic fashion. She always depended upon my imagination to devine what she omitted to say.

"Please do what you can for her," it ran, "fresh eggs or something. I can't help believing her. Hastily," etc.

I stepped outside and invited "her" to a seat on the veranda. As I did so I gave her the first real notice. She was poorly dressed, but her cotton "mitts" had been carefully darned, and her face, though flushed and perspiring, looked like that of a gentlewoman.

"What can I do for you," I asked, "My neighbor has not explained your errand."

"I only wanted to sell"- she paused for breath and tried to fan herself with the red bag. A hot wave seemed to creep over me at the sight—it looked so like a flame approaching her face. Stepping into the hall I procured a fan and offered her.

"Please don't think—I am ill"—she continued in short gasps, "I'm—perfectly well—only I've been—in Colorado but two weeks—and the light air"—

"Do not hasten. Rest a few moments before you tell you errand."

"No—I must be getting on. I stayed too—long with—your friend there. She was so—kind. But I've only made—eighteen cents this morning and—it's nearly 10 o'clock. I have needles to sell—and some curline for the hair. I think the needles are good. The points seem sharp. I don't know much about such things. I never tried to sell anything before."

Her breath was coming to her again.

"You see, it is this way," she continued. "My husband has consumption. He has had it so long that we have used up all our money and the doctor said he might get well in Colorado. Our friends in the church at the East bought us tickets to come out here, and I have a friend who gives us a room in her house, but she is poor, too, and I have to earn something for us to eat. I tried selling these things. I've been out a week and forty-eight cents is the most I ever made in one day. I have a little girl besides my sick husband, and food costs so much here."

"You cannot do much with these articles, I fear. There are so many agents."

She flushed perceptibly.

"I know it," she said, "and nobody knows how I hate to be one. They used to annoy me so. If I ever have a home again I shall feel differently, I think. Many ladies are kind like your neighbor who sent this note to you, but some—well, I wonder if I ever spoke to an agent quite as they speak to me. Pleasant words go so far, even when people do not wish to buy."

"I know," I answered, with a little inward qualm, "courtesy costs nothing, but you must make allowances sometimes. You do not know what the busy housewife may have left behind when she answers your summons at the door. Perhaps the bread is burning in the oven, or a button must be sowed on for the husband who is dressing to catch the train."

Quick recognition glanced from her eyes into mine.

"I know, I do try to make allowance. Such a curious thing happened to me yesterday. Am I taking too much time? Is your bread burning?"

"No, please go on. I have no work that cannot wait a little."

Somehow the thought of the sick husband and the young child waiting patiently in a close room for the possible forty cents made me feel like a millionaire, though only a moment ago I had felt so burdened by "hard times."

"Well, I called at a house and a little girl answered my ring. 'Can I see your mamma just a moment, dear?' I asked. She stepped into a room and I heard her say, 'Mamma, there's a nice grandma at the door'—gray hairs always mean grandmas to the little ones. I heard the mother say, 'O dear!' and heard the scissors drop from her lap as she arose. I felt sorry I had come, but it was too late. I told her my errand as quickly and politely as I could. Her face gathered a dark frown. 'No, I wouldn't buy any needles to save your life,' and the door slammed in my face. I felt so hurt that it required a good deal of resolution to enter the next house, but there I was kindly received and they asked me to rest. When I came out the woman who had been so rude stood at her gate and called to me. She asked me to come back to her house as she wished to talk to me. At first I refused, but she begged it as a favor and I went. She had a nice lunch spread to which she insisted that I should sit down. She begged my pardon for her rudeness, and wished to know what necessity forced me to canvass from house to house in such hot weather and for such small profit as she knew I must make on my needles and curline. I told her my story. 'Now,' she said, 'I will tell you mine.'

"She opened her purse—she had already taken a case of my needles, for which she paid me a dollar and would accept no change—and showed me its contents, a generous roll of bills. 'You see,' she said, 'that I have plenty of money. When that is gone I can have more. Everything I need which money can buy is mine, but I am very unhappy. Perhaps I ought not to tell you, but I will. My husband is not kind to me. From the moment he enters the house until he leaves it there is one continual storm of faultfinding. I can do nothing to please him no matter how hard I try. He had been gone but a short time when you came to the door, and he was uncommonly bad this morning. I was so angry and hurt at his treatment that I scarcely knew what I did and so vented my spleen upon the first object that came in my way. After you had gone and I thought how cruel I had been I could not rest until I had begged your forgiveness, and so I set my little girl watching for you. I hope it will be a lesson to me. I do not wish to be unkind to any one.'

"Poor woman! I, too, had learned a lesson, and, as I went away from her house, I thought I would not exchange places with her for all her precious money. And, as you say, I try to think what may be 'left behind in the house' when people are not pleasant to me. Now, if you will forgive my taking so much time and would like to see my needles."

She told me more of her story as she displayed her wares, but I need not repeat it here. It was the old, old story, so cruelly new, of unexpected reverses of fortune and utter incapacity to meet them. It was so little I could do, only to purchase some of her wares, pick her a handful of flowers and send the fresh eggs to her sick husband, but she went on her way smiling and grateful, saying as she bade me a courteous farewell: "The kind words help me as much as the money. It is so lonely here among strangers. Sometimes I almost lose heart and doubt if God is good."

I, too, learned a lesson that morning, or rather, recommitted a half-forgotten one, and as I returned to my morning task those words of Lord Houghton's kept running in my mind:

An arm of aid to the weak,
A friendly hand to the friendless,
Kind words, so short to speak
But whose echo is endless.
The world is wide, these things are small—
They may be nothing, but they are all.

BREVITIES.

There is a manifest weakness in the United States senate's physical endurance department.

The Ohio campaign is being made just as exciting as though the result was in doubt.

He who has never been tempted has little right to boast of his honor or his honesty.

Boss Croker evidently wants Bourke Cochran to realize that it is better to be born humble than eloquent.

The son-in-law of the late Dom Pedro by going to Brazil, shows that his ambition largely overbalances his good sense.

If that Jersey idea of "organizing the christian vote" should become popular, some politicians might find themselves hunting for a job.

The principle reason why hazing is still practiced in colleges, is that the college authorities were once boys themselves and know how it works.

October is the month of hunters, and in the neighborhood of our cities many things are strolling around in hunter's outfits that it would be difficult to properly classify.

Kaiser Billy is now making faces at the Berlin town council, because it had the nerve to refuse to provide at public expense, a playground for his royal "kids."

The man who didn't know exactly how the yacht race would turn out, has yet to be found. Those who lost money did it by betting against their judgment. What a curious animal man is, anyway.

If Senator Blackburn has the proof that the European banking house of Rothschild carried gold from the United States at a loss, for the purpose of forcing a panic and influencing legislation, he should lose no time in producing it.

Keep your eye skinned for the job in that scheme to annex the territory of lower California to the United States. If we are not mistaken that alleged English-American syndicate which claims to have bought the property, is merely a blind.

The Choctaw Indians should now be considered thoroughly civilized, their treasurer having "skipped," leaving a shortage of something like $100,000. Considering the amount he had to handle, no Chicago or New York man could have made a heavier haul.

NEPOTISM IN OFFICE.

The Dockery-Cockrell Joint Commission, which is investigating the executive departments to see how the service may be improved, is gathering some surprising information. It is usually considered that one member out of a family is enough at the public crib. The commission finds 5610 people with relatives drawing salaries in the departments at Washington. There are two persons who have no relatives with them in office. This is the limit. Five officials have eight relatives apiece on salaries with them. Four have seven relatives each in government service. Ten have six apiece; 26 have five apiece; 96 have four apiece; 279 have three apiece; 1037 have two apiece, and 451 have one apiece. There are 17,599 persons in the departments at Washington, and 5610, or one-third of them, have relatives similarly favored.

In thirty-seven cases both husband and wife are drawing government salaries.

In on case, husband, wife, brother and son and one other relative are on the pay roll.

In another, a husband, wife, sister and five other relatives are provided with places.

There are 887 cases of brothers in service and 927 cases of sisters.

One woman clerk has her husband two brothers and one sister, drawing salaries with her.

Two officials have four brothers apiece in office, besides three other relatives each.

The parents employed who have sons in office number 333.

Fifteen officials have both sons and daughters in office.

Two have sons and daughters and other relatives.

This wholesale nepotism in the departments, the length and breadth of which nobody imagined until the commission unearthed the facts, will be the subject of legislation of a radical and stringent character.

There is a very strong sentiment in this country against a civil pension list. Yet the commission finds what amounts to the same thing prevailing on a large scale in the departments. Men and women who have outlived their usefulness are being carried upon the pay rolls because their superiors are too sympathetic to dismiss them. They do next to nothing. There is one person over 90 on the pay roll. There are six between 85 and 90 years of age; thirty-three between 80 and 85 years; sixty-six between 75 and 80; and 182 between 70 and 75 years. The number between 65 and 70 is 386. The number in the departments over 60, which is thought to be the limit of efficient service, is 1413, which is nearly one-half the entire departmental force in Washington. The great defect in the government civil service is that there is no limit of age or service. There is no way of getting in fresh blood. There is much truth in the old saying, that government officials seldom die and never resign.

One person now in office at Washington has been drawing government pay for sixty years. Eleven have been on the pay roll forty years. One hundred and nine have records of thirty years. Those who have held their official positions twenty years or over reach the number of 2065, or one-eighth of the entire force. Nearly half of the 17,599 officials in the departments have had ten years or more of the good salaries and easy duties which make these positions so highly coveted.

Women now hold 5637 places in the departments. They number one-third of the entire pay roll.

Most of the persons in office in Washington got in without having to pass any civil service examination. They were in before the law went into operation ten years ago, or they escaped the formality some way. It appears from the investigation of the commission that there are only 3675 officials now in service who have passed the civil service examination, just one-fifth of the entire number drawing pay. According to the law there are 8027 persons who hold positions subject to civil service examination for appointment, but 4762 of them escaped this by being in before the civil service law went into operation and sticking to their places. The commission has gone far enough in its investigation to uncover the necessity for great reforms in the civil service.—News Report.

And yet there are those clamoring for civil service reform for the purpose of establishing an office-holder's aristocracy. These mugwumps for the most part, live in New York and voted for Cleveland.

General Wade Hampton, commissioner of railroads, has recommended in his annual report the appointment by the government of a commission having full power to determine the indebtedness of the bond-aided Pacific railroads to the government. There are many indications that the democrats will try to get rid of this troublesome question by the device suggested by Wade Hampton. Of course no commission is needed for the purpose indicated, for the treasury department can furnish the amount of the indebtedness of the various subsidized railroads in less time than it would take to write out the text of the resolution creating such a commission. But the creation of a commission will serve a couple of purposes admirably. First, it would take the question away from congress, for the present, and it would give several good democrats fine fat positions. It will be interesting to watch the outcome of the matter.

An Alabama exchange, democratic, breaks out with these words: "With hogs at the present profitable price, and with two ears of corn to every stalk, and with three stalks to the hill, and with four hundred hills to the row, and eleven rows to the acre, and fourty acres to evey man and boy in this county, this vocation of the calamity howler is no longer considered a sinecure in this community."

In Doubt.

"So you have got a wife," said Chaffer to a newly married man. "I don't know—don't know," replied the man with evident hesitation. "Sometimes I think I've got her, and sometimes I think she's got me. You see, I've only been married a few months, and I can't tell just yet how the combination is going to turn out."—Tit-bits.

War on Closets.

Of course, it is not easy to change houses already built, but I give a hint to all who are building to suit themselves, not to have a closet in the house—at least not without a window. Physicians condemn all dark closets as haunts of vitiated air. Were I building, there would not be a closet in the house unless it were large enough to have a sash window. Have a trunk room and an airy linen press, if you please, where the mother can sit and mend and sort her sheets and table cloths in sunshine, but no dark closet.

Instead, all bed-rooms should have large pine or cedar wardrobes, with double doors to open the whole front. These can be made at the time of building much cheaper than closets can be built into the walls, and they remain movable, always sweet and every way convenient. Added to this, clothes are better kept from dust and insects in them. They can be built quite as large as closets, with a drawer for shoes, while the top is useful as a shelf.—Chicago Journal.

The Art of Advertising.

A young man of agreeable exterior and ample means delires to form the acquaintance of a lady with the view of making her his partner for life. Beauty and wealth are not so much an object as a good character and an amiable disposition. Young ladies who may feel inclined to cast their lot with him are hereby requested to call at Herr Meyer's confectionery establishment tomorrow afternoon at 3 o'clock, and as a means of recognition to eat an apple tart.

A few minutes after 3 the whole stock of apple tarts was cleared out.—Sheffield Telegraph.

Closure.

Lily White. Did you have many offers during the summer?

Phœbe Bird. Many? Why, I had to limit the proposal speeches to five minutes.—Puck.

High Culture.

A lady of no little culture and refinement upon whom we were once making an afternoon call suddenly interrupted the conversation by addressing her little daughter thus: "Ethel dear, get up off that rug this minute, do!"

"Why, mamma?" innocently asked the child with round-eyed wonder.

"Why?" returned the mother. "Don't you see? Your dress is pink, and that rug is decidedly crimson, and I can not endure such a combination of hues. Get up, please."

The child slowly rose, and the world moved on.

Ethel's mamma was infected with the asthetic—measles.—Boston Courier.

MISGUIDED JAMES.

James K. Weatherford, of Albany, is in attendance on the bimetallic convention at St. Louis, pouring out his life blood in the interest of the free and unlimited coinage of silver. He is opposed to the repeal of the Sherman law and therefore wants the government to continue to purchase four and a half million dollars worth of silver per month, even at the price of business stagnation, hard times and ruin to the rest of the country. He wants the government to be a sort of father to the silver mines of Colorado and Montana, with their wealthy owners and foreign laborers, who resort to dynamite and bloodshed to keep up wages. As Oregon is entirely an agricultural state, and as her general prosperity depends absolutely upon the well-fare and prosperity of her farmers, Mr. Weatherford would stand before his neighbors in a much more favorable light if he would busy himself to secure the monthly purchase by the government of four and a half million dollars worth of wheat, vegetables and other products of the farm, which, on account of the fatherly interest showed by the government upon the silver industry are almost without a market. If James proposes to be charitable he should not forget that "charity begins at home."—Corvallis Times.

Matter Without Weight.

A German paper says that a cook who had burned a 5-pound joint of veal, to avoid a scolding threw the spoiled meat away and told her mistress that the cat had eaten it. "Indeed," said the lady, "we will see about that," and she took the cat, put it on the kitchen scales and found that it weighed precisely 5 pounds. "There Katherine," she said, "I suppose that is five pounds of meat, but please tell me where is the cat?"—Youth's Companion.

Only a Figure of Speech.

"He will lead her to the altar" is a favorite formula about a wedding, but how seldom a bridegroom leads his bride to the altar. He usually contrives to get there alone, or with one best man, and the bride's father or somebody else does the leading.—Boston Transcript.

The rural districts of Clackamas county are to have the convenience of a telegraph connecting with Oregon city and Portland. A line has been in successful operation for a year, from Cape Horn, on the Columbia, to Portland. It is to be extended to neighborhood centers thoroughout the county.