

Our Town's Most Interesting Street

By Geraldine Brown

The city dump is at one end of it, in fact it is almost a part of it. It really isn't a street at all, this welter of pungent smelling tenement houses. It is a sort of large alley. The street itself is almost as crooked as the pitiful legs of the children living on it, who are undernourished. Probably this is very sordid sounding to you, but to me this is the most interesting street in town, because I live on it.

You never appreciate true neighborliness until you live on the other side of the tracks. In this realm of poverty-stricken gangsters, racketeers and suspicious characters, privacy does not exist. On Mondays when you hang out your laundry Mrs. O'Grady, on your right calls over and inquires: "And where did you get those beautiful dish towels?"

Now, if you have learned the code of the neighborhood you'll unhesitatingly tell her, in Grant's basement. The two of you will swap bargains for the balance of the morning. Mrs. O'Grady will tell you of the wonderful letter she received from her son in prison. It really isn't a secret, as is nothing else on this extraordinary street.

Sometimes a group of city officials will call, holding their noses with one hand and their pencil and pad in the other and ask you how much rent you pay, how many sleep in a bed, and other questions. This, however, is not often; somehow these visits never seem to amount to much. I often wonder why they make these calls. Some day, however, these visits might mean that these old fire traps will be torn down and new ones erected.

Saturday night is when you really appreciate this street of broken dreams. The din is so great you can't hear yourself think. The children, sometimes as many as four at a time, are thrust into boiling cauldrons and a week's dirt removed in one night. As Mrs. Polaski on my lower left relates, that "cleanliness is Godliness." Although there is seldom any indication of either about these numerous small Polaskis.

Sunday the majority of the street turns out for some church. Shabby but clean, poor but many of them honest, they kneel to thank the Heavenly Father for keeping them well, for allowing them to have a roof over their heads and various other blessings. The stench of the dump is forgotten, the water that runs continuously, the furnaces that throw off more smoke than heat are all things of the past.

Many of you will believe this to be gross exaggeration. Few of you have seen human beings die because they haven't a desire to live. They aren't

brave enough to face another day of bill collectors, these cowards who wish to die. Their stomachs rebel at the conglomeration of smells that meet them with the dawn.

This street is not well known. When you mention its name people will sneer and smirk. But there is no man alive who can truthfully say it's not interesting. This street is most interesting to me. I live in a tenement on the third floor, back in the rear. My bedroom window looks down on a wonderful assortment of cans, rotten fruit and vegetables. It is very interesting, this street is, to me. Because to me this street is home.

NOTE.—The above was written by a Negro girl in her Regents' examination, fourth year English, at the North High School of Binghamton, New York. It was read from two pulpits, broadcast over the radio and printed in the morning newspaper. The authorities have promised to look into the matter again, but did nothing. Charles Dickens didn't do any better than this in his *Oliver Twist* or *Hard Times*. What irony, bitterness, sarcasm, pathos—and resignation!

After the stir created by the above essay, C. LeBaron Goeller, President of the Henry George Free Tract Society, Endwell, N. Y., secured for this talented girl a \$100 scholarship at Wilberforce University. Additional funds were borrowed by the mother. The girl was forced to discontinue her schooling last fall for lack of funds. Readers wishing to help further the potentialities of this young woman may send their contributions to Dr. Murray Shipland Howland, Pastor, First Presbyterian Church, 42 Chenango Street, Binghamton, N. Y.

The Fundamentalism of Georgeism

For nearly four decades we have been printing fundamental articles on Henry Georgeism, or Single-Taxism, or what Wm. Lloyd Garrison called the New Abolition. Send for samples. They are Free.

HENRY GEORGE FREE TRACT SOCIETY

Box 105

Endwell, N. Y., U. S. A.

(Tract printing since 1906)