

TRYING TO BE A SERVANT.

MELIEE GETS STRANGE EXPERIENCE AT TWO EMPLOYMENT AGENCIES.

She Pays a Dollar to the Agent and is Guaranteed a Situation—She Has No Reference. The Agent Knows Nothing of Her Character—Nevertheless, He Declares to a Customer that She Possesses All the Virtues in the Calendar—Can a Common Thief Thus Recommended Get Service in New York Homes—How Applicants are Treated—The Agency Fees to Make Money—Whether the Girls Get Places or Not—The Old-Town Trick—A Weary Waiting for Work—Queer Experiences.

ONE of the misthought know what a great question the servant question is and how many perplexing questions it has. The mistress and servants, of course, fill the leading side. Then, in the lesser, but still important parts, come the agencies, which, despite the many references changing against them, declare themselves public benefactors. Even the "fancy man" manages to fill a great deal of space with the subject. It is a serious question, since it affects all one holds dear in his one's dinner, one's bed and one's linen. I had heard so many complaints from long-suffering mistresses, worried servants, agencies and I was determined to investigate the subject to my satisfaction. There was only one way to do it. That was to procure a servant and apply for a situation. I knew that there might be such a thing as "references" required, and, as I had never tested my abilities in this line, I did not know how to furnish them. Still, it would not do to allow a little thing like a "reference" to stop me in my work, and I would not ask my friend to commit himself to further my efforts. Many times at one time he would refer me, I thought, and this encouraged me to make the risk.

On Monday afternoon I called upon the "Woman" office from a lawyer complaining of an agency where, he claimed, a client of his had paid for a servant, and the agent then refused to produce a girl. This story I decided to make my first essay. I dressed to look the character I wanted to represent, I walked up Fourth avenue until I found No. 89, the place I wanted. It was a low frame building, which retained all the impressions of old age. The room on the first floor was filled with a collection of articles which gave the appearance of a second-hand store. By a side door, leading against the wall, was a large sign which told the passing public that this was the entrance to the "Germania Servants' Agency." On a straight, blue board, fastened lengthwise to a second-story window, was in large, engraving white letters, the ominous word, "Servants."

before me, but the dirty, unscrupled hall and narrow, filthy-looking staircase, I went on to my fate. I passed two closed doors on the first landing and on the third I saw the word "Office." I did not knock, but I turned the knob of the door, and, as I struck top and bottom, I pressed my shoulder against it. It gave way, so did I, and I entered on



IN THE INTELLIGENCE OFFICE. It was a small room, with a low ceiling, a dusty carpet and cheaply papered walls. A heavy railing and a high desk and counter which divided the room gave the appearance of a police court. Around the walls were hung colored advertisements of steamship lines and maps. Above the mantle, which was decorated with two plaster-paria heads, was a square sheet of white paper. I viewed the large black letters on the paper with a quaking heart. "References investigated!" With two exclamation points. Now, if it had only been put quietly and mildly, or even with one exclamation point, it would have been a great deal of comfort to the eyes. This of writing my own references was very demanding.

A young woman who was standing with a downcast head by the window turned to look at the abrupt newcomer. A man who had apparently been conversing with her, came hastily forward to the desk. He was a middle-aged man, with a sharp gray eye, a bald head, and a black frock coat buttoned up tightly, showing to disadvantage his rounded shoulders.

QUESTIONED IN THE AGENCY. "What he said to me in a questioning manner, he glanced quickly over my 'leg up.'" "Are you the man who gets places for girls?" I asked, as if there were but one such man. "Yes, I'm the man. Do you want a place?" he asked, with a decidedly German twang. "Yes, I want a place," I replied. "What do you work at last?" "Oh, I was a chambermaid. Can you get me a position, do you think?" "Yes, I can do that," he replied. "You're a nice-looking girl, and I can soon get you a place. Just the other day I got a girl a place for \$30 a month, just because she was nice-looking. Many gentlemen, and ladies, too, will pay more when girls are nice-looking. Where did you work last?" "I'm working in Atlantic City," I replied, with a mental cry for forgiveness. "Have you no city reference?" "No, none whatever, but I want a job in this city, that's why I came here."

some people are mighty particular about references. "Have you no place you can send me to now?" I said, determined to get my business as soon as possible. "You have to pay to get your name entered on the book first," he said, opening a large ledger, as he asked, "What is your name?" "How much more?" "That depends entirely on your salary," he answered, non-committal. "Your name?"

HE PAYS THE REQUIRED DOLLAR. "Now, if I give you a dollar you will assure me a situation?" "Certainly; that's what I'm here for." "And you guarantee me work in this city?" I trembled. "Oh, certainly, certainly; that's what this agency is for. I'll get you a place, sure enough." "All right, I'll give you a dollar, which is a great deal for a girl out of town. My name is Meliee Lee."



OUT OF WORK. "Oh, anything," I replied, with a generosity that surprised myself.

"That'll suit me," he said, and he handed me a card. "I'll get you a place, sure enough." "All right, I'll give you a dollar, which is a great deal for a girl out of town. My name is Meliee Lee."

that it was immaterial to them, only I had a better chance to secure work if I was aware there it was for my own good they suggested it. I had one glance of the adjoining bedroom, and that signified to me firm in my determination to sleep elsewhere.

THE ROOM. "The evening drew on I felt that they would have no more applications for servants that afternoon, and after asking the hour that I should return in the morning, I requested a receipt for my money. "You don't need to see a particular," he said, crossly, but I told him I was, and insisted until he was forced to comply. It was not much of a receipt. The words on the blank side of the agency's advertising card:

On the 30th of October, 1887, I made my appearance at the agency. Some eight or ten girls were in the room, and the man who had pocketed my fee on the previous afternoon still stood the throne back of the desk. No one said a word, or anything else, for that matter, so I quietly strolled on a chair near the door. The girls were all comfortably dressed, and as they had enjoyed their breakfast. All sat silent, with a dreamy expression on their faces, except two who stood by the window watching the passing throng and conversing in whispers with one another. I wanted to be with or near them, so that I might hear what was said. After waiting for some time I decided to walk to the office that I wanted work, not rest.

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collet girl, good, neat, quick and of an amiable disposition. I was astonished at his knowledge of my good qualities, but I maintained a lofty silence.

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not find her appearance the day previous she could not expect to obtain a situation. He refused to state her word if there was any change. Then a messenger boy called and said that Mrs. Vanderpool, of No. 89 West Thirty-ninth street, wanted the girl advertised in the morning paper. Irish girl No. 1 was sent, and she returned, after several hours absence, to say that Mrs. Vanderpool said, when she learned where the girl came from, that she knew all about agencies and their schemes and she did not propose to have a girl from them. The girl bid Mrs. Vanderpool's shoes and returned to the agency to take her part of waiting.

I succeeded at last in drawing one of the girls—Wendell Packer—into conversation. She said she had been waiting for several days and that she had no chance of a place yet. The agency had a place "Oh of course if they tried to force girls who did not wish to go, they would not leave the city. Quite strange they never offered the place to girls who said they would work anywhere. Wendell Packer wanted it, but they would not let it go, they tried to insist on me accepting it."

"Well, now, if you would take that I would like to see you get a place this winter," he said angrily, when he found that I would not go out of the city. "Why, you promised that you would find me a situation in the city."

"That's no difference; if you won't take it, I offer, you can do without," he said indignantly. "Then give me my money," I said. "No, you can't have your money. That goes into the bureau—I've got audited, and so on, and so I left the agency to return no more."

EHRICHS. EHRICHS'. EHRICHS'. EHRICHS'. EHRICHS'. EHRICHS'. EHRICHS'. EHRICHS'. EHRICHS'. EHRICHS'.

Sweeping Reductions in Every Department. Every Item Offered a Sale.

Advertisement for Ehrichs' clothing store, listing various items like ladies' newmarkets, lace curtains, millinery, great sale of lazes, jerseys, men's and boys' clothing, corsets, toboggan caps, shoe department, and folding mirrors.