HE problem had been a difficult one to tackle. It was necessary, even, to refer it to a number of subcommittees, and it had been side-tracked for weeks; but the Society had arrived, at last, at a happy and humane solution. In the polite nomenclature of charity the family of Pasquale junior was about to be broken up.

Because of tendencies not to be tolerated in polite society, Pasquale senior had, some time since, been landed at that haven of all daring souls: “The Island.” The wife of Pasquale had washed, and washed again, and coughed, and had recently landed, also, at other islands, but of uncertain location. It was not reasonable to suppose that the Society could go on paying weekly rent for three children when the responsibility might be shifted, so the Sub-Committee had decided upon a farm for Pasquale junior, a Home spelled with a capital H for little Assunta, and the orphan asylum for the baby; and it sent its chairlady to notify the family.

Assunta had just finished wiping the three dishes, and the teapot—from which the baby had drained the last blissful dregs—and she was rolling up the dish towel into the figure of a doll. Some time since Assunta had abandoned the doll myth as an exploded theory—as long ago as three years, when she was six; but the baby was an excuse for slight frivolity.

Pasquale junior sat upon the table, jingling three dimes and a nickel, and raising his thin little chest to greater height than would have seemed possible from his twelve hard years.

“Sausages this night, Assunta,” he said, “and macaroni! I already got them by the delicatessen. All the papers by me I sold. “Murder, murder!!” I cry, “All about the murder!!” And no murder is, but I sell all the papers. Assunta,” Pasquale’s voice sank to a whisper, lest the bare walls repeat his words, “Assunta, one can a dollar and seventy-five make by the hospital! Run under a horse at the curbing—a little bit—so.” He illustrated by crawling under the table.

“Get run over. Comes the ambulance; comes the cop and the doctor. Come free beds at the hospital; and from off visitors you can get money by telling how your mother died on you. My frien’ did it. I, also, could do it.”

But the tenement door opened, and the chairlady entered. It was not an attractive interior, and it did seem that the Society had
been wise in its decision. The table, chair, couch, and the packing box cut down for a cradle, had all seen better, palmier days. The baby, who put his thumb in his mouth, and curled his lip uncertainly at the entrance of a stranger, was not quite cleanly in his appearance.

Assunta picked up her brown calico skirts, and made the quaint courtesy her mother had brought from the old country. Pasquale, recovering suddenly from his horse episode beneath the table, rose and doffed his father's fur cap which he wore at all times now as insignia of his rank as head of the family—and Pasquale bowed, also, to the representative of charity.

"Dear little children," began the chairlady, auspiciously, stooping down to pick up the baby, who promptly emitted shrieks of anguish, and held up his arms beseechingly to Assunta, "You are not going to live in this horrible tenement house any longer. We are coming to get you all in the morning. Pasquale shall go to a nice farmer in the country, and learn how to make hay. Assunta is going to a big house where she can have a clean apron every day, and learn to cook—and the baby, little man,"—the baby opened his mouth for a fresh wail—"is going to live with all the other babies."

"We all by the same train go?" asked Assunta passively. Long experience in sudden exits and entrances had left her stolid as regards the unexpected descent of Societies.

"Pasquale will the baby carry, and I his bottles?"

"But you don't understand, little girl," said the chairlady with decision. "You can't all go to the same place. We really have to break up families often in order to care for them properly.

"Good-bye. Be ready by ten in the morning, and do try to have clean faces and hands." And the chairlady took her rustling departure down the long stairs, on other errands of mercy bent.

Assunta carefully closed the door, and wiped two tears from her cheek with the hem of her dress.

"Who will the baby's bottles fix?" she asked, as if of the East Side in general—"And who will your tea make, Pasquale?"

She sat down on the floor and rocked her arms in an agony of anticipation.

"Pasquale, Pasquale, I our mother promised to mind the baby."

But Pasquale was a man of action.

"Never go I to the country, Assunta, crickets are there, and cows with bushing tails, and other beasts of prey. Off books I read of them. Never will I chuck my job of papers. I will my family support."
"WHOM THE GODS LOVE"

"Assunta, the furniture pack, and the baby dress. I rent the Ginny's cart for five cents. We, to-night, move!"

It was a gala night in the vicinity of Chatham Square. "Port Arthur" from cellar to roof garden was glittering with flags and lights, and resounding with the crash of Chinese music, the rattle of glasses, and the popping of corks, as the diners made merry. The little Chinese shopkeeper around the corner on Pell Street was doing so flourishing a business that merry bells and Fyiama China had risen several points in value since early in the evening.

Here, in a dusky alley, could be seen a Bowery tough making his cautious way toward the shadows of Doyers Street and from the Bowery Mission came the vociferous strain:

"Just as I am, without one plea,
Save that Thy blood was shed for me."

A painted lady in pink evening dress and red slippers, passing by, rapped upon the window, and pressed her face against the pane with a drunken leer that turned the hymn to a lurid song in the back of the room, and caused the departure of half a dozen men in her wake.

On one side of the street appeared the startling sign:

"Piano Players Renovated, Inside and Out"—flanked by the announcement:

"Men Soled and Heeled While You Wait."

From the sky a light snow began sifting down—filtering through the Elevated tracks, and mocked in its purity by the mud it met below.

In the back room of "Hot Tom and Jerry's", business was booming. Hot Tom himself was presiding at the bar, and Jerry was kept busy opening the side door which, from the outside, looked so much like a gate in the wall, and which could, from the inside, be conveniently locked, and barred. Every table in the room was taken. A white-coated waiter was holding a bottle with one hand as he swung a girl about in a mad waltz with the other. From the shrill piano came the tune of "New Hampshire Molly," and in the midst of the revelry the painted lady wandered in and leaned nonchalantly against the bar.

"Howdy, Diza!" said Hot Tom as he began industriously mixing gin and lemons for her.

"Bowery Diza," said the waiter in explanation to a girl.

"She's a slick un, she is! Threw a lamp at a man and killed
him last year. Got another woman strung up for it. She knows every den in the Bowery. Put her onto the job, and she could make 'way with the Commissioner himself, if she thought there was enough in it. Jerry pays her a good round sum for—"

Diza interrupted the conversation by stumbling into the center of the hall, swinging her arms in a mocking imitation of the leader of the Bowery Mission, and swaying to and fro in a dance, as she sang in a quavering voice:

"Just as I am, and waiting not
To rid my soul of one dark blot."

Her movements became quicker and quicker as the heat of the room and the applause of the men and women at the tables egged her on—but, suddenly, Jerry stepped in from the hall.

He was wiping the tears of suppressed mirth from his eyes with his coat sleeve, as he said:

"Diza, Diza, here's the rummest go of the season! There's a little kid outside with a load of furniture in a push-cart. Got a girl and a baby with him. Says his family was going to be broke up in the morning and so he had to move tonight. Saw the sign next door. 'Rooms for Gentlemen, 25c.' Says he wants one fur his family." Jerry doubled up, and was obliged to wipe his eyes again at the humor of his news.

"Says he thought the Square would be a good paper stand, and he could earn fifty a day. Told him he couldn't have one of those rooms under a dollar seventy-five a night—come on out, and see the show, Diza!"

It may have been the breath of cool, night air that blew in with the entrance of Jerry—or it was, perhaps, the chance of a gathering crowd and the opportunity of being seen by the multitude, and the novelty of the situation as presented by Jerry. Whatever may have been the stimulus, Diza went to the saloon door, still humming mockingly, "Just as I am," and looked out into the night at a novel sight in Chinatown.

Assunta sat on the curbing in the gathering snow; the baby asleep in her lap, and the teapot beside her. The push-cart which it had taken great labor to pack and push stood in the gutter, and Pasquale stood beside it, his hands in his pockets, his father's cap pulled down over his ears, and a discouraged tone in his voice as he looked up at the tempting sign.
"WHOM THE GODS LOVE"

"The man said I should one dollar seventy-five pay," he said to Assunta. "And the lady of the house comes out in a pink dress. She, also, will say the price is rise."

Up Third Avenue could be heard the rattle of the fire truck.

"A friend of mine by the hospital, one dollar and seventy-five earned," said Pasquale, in a half whisper.

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"Hold tight by the baby, Assunta."

It was a matter of seconds, only,—and the crying came from the baby thus rudely awakened from his nap by the crowd and the confusion—so one could be quite sure that Diza felt no pain.

They carried her in, and laid her tenderly on the bar with someone’s coat for a pillow, and Hot Tom’s apron to cover the red spots on the pink.

And as Jerry said in a husky voice to the Bowery in general, "She saved the Kid’s life, Diza did"—Diza opened her eyes only once, and whispered:

"A rum little kid—— ‘Just as I am, and waiting not’"—before her soul fared out through the snow.

The underworld rolled on at its usual rapid rate the next day, save for the fact that Hot Tom was absent from his time-honored post. Purple from the embarrassment of a collar and necktie, he had traversed the white vista of the Children’s Ward until he reached Pasquale in his free bed, and Assunta, the baby, and a store doll, seated nearby upon the floor.

"Oh, no, not seriously injured," said the nurse, smoothing covers and adjusting a bandage with her practised hand, "only bruised. Yes, I will explain to the Society that has the case in charge. You wish to deposit the amount in trust for them? That will greatly relieve the little boy’s mind. He is worried lest he be separated from his sister and the baby."

And Pasquale shut his eyes, and buried his head in the pillows. Had he not, after all, emulated the example of his friend?