

read and listen to as possible. We hold that this is an erroneous impression. Matters affecting the welfare of the Jewish poor, their life, their health, their ambitions and aspirations, are of vital interest to the enlightened and to the intelligent among us. In an age when social welfare and social service are the dominant issues in politics and in religion, it were incongruous for a social agency to hold that its problems and workings are of interest only to the few who are active members of its directorate.

"If, however, there are some who are not interested, who don't care, then what shall we do? Shall we descend to their level? Shall we, because of this condense our statements to the public in the form of concentrated pills, or shall we, instead, redouble our efforts to make them realize that they must know 'how the other half lives'; nay, more, they must know what is being done in their behalf, so as to help them out of their condition.

WORK WITH BLIND

Benjamin Bernstein
New York

For some years effort has been made to assist the Jewish blind, not only in the city of New York, but throughout the country. These efforts have, however, been sporadic and have been based, judging by results, on theories not particularly adapted to work for the blind. Attention was directed largely to such work for individuals as would come within the field of the ordinary charity society, and little or no systematic effort was made to deal with those problems which arose particularly from blindness. In addition, the Jewish blind of the city of New York received some aid from non-sectarian organizations. A number of our people received the city's annual donation to the dependent blind, amounting to an average of \$50 per person. Aside from this nothing was done for the Jewish blind, and their condition was, and still is, deplorable. Many of them had not breathed God's fresh air for years, one man had not left his room for fifteen years, because his family either could not, or would not, take him

"Matters of policy and administration, and the methods employed in the charity office must be of interest, not only to the professional social worker, but to every citizen.

"This, then, we believe, fully justifies the publication of this paper, made possible by the contribution from a friend of the poor, a business man, who believes in publicity applied to philanthropy as well as to business."

It is contended that in communities of a Jewish population of 30,000 or over such publications can be made very helpful. The opportunity is afforded therein of describing the work in a more vivid fashion than is possible in the annual report.

Some Jewish national organizations have long ago found the monthly publication a valuable means of securing the interest and support of the public. The journals published by the Jewish Consumptives' Relief Society of Denver and the Hebrew Sheltering and Immigrant Aid Society of New York are notable examples.

out. The intelligent Jewish blind became dissatisfied with these conditions, and it was determined that something must be done by way of improvement.

About that time Mr. Jacob Salmonwitz became interested in the problem of producing Yiddish and Hebrew literature in embossed type for the blind. With the assistance of Hon. Joseph Barondess, and Mr. Joseph S. Marcus, president of the Bank of United States, a meeting was held at the Educational Alliance, September, 1913, and a small sum was raised for Mr. Salmonwitz's purpose.

Shortly thereafter Mr. Marcus, when laying the cornerstone of his bank building, determined to use the roof of the building as a recreation center for the Jewish blind. This was accordingly opened in July, 1914.

It was soon seen that the providing of Yiddish and Hebrew literature in embossed type was not as necessary as were other measures for the improvement of existing conditions of the Jewish blind. It was also

felt that for once the blind themselves should initiate and direct the movement, in order that their ideas could be put to practical use. With these ideas in mind, and for the purpose of generally improving the social and industrial welfare of the Jewish blind, the Hebrew Association for the Blind was organized on August 4, 1914.

As yet, measured by figures, this association has accomplished very little; it has, however, dragged the Jewish blind from their homes, and provided a center where they can meet socially and enjoy readings, games and such other amusements as may be provided. This is the first time that the idea of a center like that above described has been put into operation in New York City. It has resulted thus far in bringing the blind closer together and in creating a certain unity of spirit, which is necessary for the successful solution of their problems.

We have secured work of various kinds for a number of our applicants and in one instance secured an engagement for three of our number to supply public dance music. We have, of course, furnished relief in cases of need, have provided the less fortunate with proper supplies for the various Jewish holidays and have ministered to their needs so far as our limited means would permit.

We are at present engaged in trying to solve two important problems: namely, that of securing guides to lead about our blind people and procuring suitable employment for those able to work.

This association for the first time in the history of work for the blind in the United States is attempting systematically to deal with the guide problem. We recognize

that our roof garden is of no use unless we can assemble our people there and get them safely back to their homes. We also realize that it is very important that there be a system by which the blind can be taken to and from their homes in their search for employment, etc. In the matter of employment we recognize that it is not a mass problem with which we are dealing, but that each case must be handled according to its individual problem.

We have made no extensive plans, but we are proceeding slowly and steadily, doing every day what we can, and not attempting to lay out broad schemes which perhaps we shall never be able to carry out. Nevertheless, we have vision in regard to future work, some of which plans are briefly stated on our membership blanks as follows:

"The object of this association is to improve the conditions of the Jewish blind, and prevent blindness. To endeavor to publish and circulate 'Yiddish' and Hebrew literature among the Jewish blind. To provide guides for blind people when needed. To help the Jewish blind become self-supporting."

We derive our funds entirely from popular subscription. Mr. Joseph S. Marcus, in addition to the roof garden, has generously provided the association with a commodious office in his bank building. In this office the association's work is done and here during the winter months the blind have their center. As our means expand we hope to do much more and better work, but so long as the present depression continues, we shall probably have to be content with the slow progress we have been making.

THE EAST SIDE FORUM

Jacob N. Sokohl
New York

The East Side Forum has now completed a very busy year. That it was a success is fully attested by the large crowds that attended its meetings and even more by the deep interest in the neighborhood in its activities. Over 30,000 people attended the thirty-odd meetings of the Forum, averaging over 1000 to a meeting and packing to capacity the auditorium of Public School

No. 62, the home of the Forum. Thousands more were turned away because of the tremendous crowds and the S. R. O. sign worked overtime.

The Forum has already passed its experimental stage and is now a recognized institution in the intellectual life of the East Side. No other one neighborhood activity can boast of having elicited such

general enthusiasm and interest on the part of the intellectual-hungry East Siders.

The main activity of the Forum was, of course, its meetings. Men of national and local prominence were invited to address the audiences, city officials were invited to explain the work of city departments and to discuss city problems, men prominent in a particular sphere of thought and considered authorities on their subjects gave of their best to impart to the audiences their point of view. At the end of the speech about half an hour was allowed for questioning the speaker. The questions were, in the large majority of cases, intelligent and spirited, and showed real interest in the meetings and topic discussed.

One of the notable meetings was the "Bank Depositors' Night." Eugene Lamb Richards, state superintendent of banks, was invited to speak, shortly after several of the East Side banks had failed. Many of the depositors were in the audience and it was indeed a lively meeting. So lively was it that, on several occasions, there were indications of a rather abrupt and inopportune ending.

Mr. Walsh of the United States Commission of Industrial Relations addressed one of the most enthusiastic gatherings of the season. Hundreds of people were turned away at the doors, and the crowd within was one of the biggest ever in the auditorium.

The last meeting of the Forum took the form of a band concert at Seward Park, which immediately adjoins Public School No. 62. In spite of the rain, over 2500 people huddled together with nothing to protect them from the rain but umbrellas (and mighty few had umbrellas), and stayed throughout the concert. This was indeed most inspiring and showed what sacrifices East Siders make to hear good music.

Several other activities have been started in connection with the Forum, which, while still in the experimental stage, give promise of rapid development along lines that will be of service to the neighborhood. Classes in economics, sociology, biology and philosophy were started and several instructors from the College of the City of New York consented to take charge. Although this activity is still in its formative

period, the possibilities of a real "people's university" is becoming clearer and clearer. One of the possible outcomes may be the establishment of a branch of the City College on the East Side to meet the needs of the more intelligent immigrants.

A local information bureau with a large volunteer staff has been started and gives every indication of becoming popular and of vital importance. There are a surprising amount of big and little things, comparatively simple, upon which the immigrant is not informed.

This activity, however, is still in an experimental condition, but already gives promise of life and wide scope for next season. There are many new plans for next season's program in the Forum, and the old ones will be worked out in more perfect detail. It is hoped that next year will be even more successful than the past season.

The possibilities of such an institution for the sensing of public opinion is easily seen. The people—the common people—who, as a rule, have little time or inclination to devote their serious thought to civic and governmental problems, are given a new birthright; they come to the school to listen to men who are leaders in public thought, to discuss with them the fundamentals of public policy in its various phases; to glean information from the best minds, and to be inspired to seek out for themselves that knowledge which books alone can give to them.

The Forum is a revival—a revival of the old Greek agora, the Roman Forum, and the Anglo-Saxon town assemblies; it is a revival that augurs well for democracy and should be supported and pushed forward enthusiastically by all sincere believers in democracy.

EXCHANGE BUREAU

Young man, 27 years of age (married), University of Chicago graduate and specialized in sociology under the late Dr. Henderson, desires to secure position in Jewish social work with an opportunity for advancement. References. Address Felix S. Pathman, 1308 South Millard Avenue, Chicago, Ill.

THE FINISHING TOUCH

Mary H. Kraus

Out of the seething cauldron of "May Matter" that was put on to boil at the recent Conference of Jewish Social Workers, there arose a few bubbles, as bubbles always do in a pot that is properly boiling. The whole Conference, cooked, cooled and digested, has served its purposes and it can take care of itself. It is these "bubbles" that I would speak of. Shall we let them burst and become again an inseparable part of the whole, or shall we, by some yet unknown process, make them independent and able to float of themselves, to crystallize them into real spheres, into real crystal balls wherein we can read something of the future.

There are a great many men and women in social work who have known since they were in the secondary school that they would enter social work; that they would help in the world's struggle to equalize social forces, to help the immigrant, as he puts his foot for the first time on foreign soil; to bring the normal happiness of a child's life to the many little street urchins who have never sung a kindergarten song or planted a nasturtium seed; to help in whatever way they could to make up for the deficiencies in the scale of things.

These people, therefore, went about in a businesslike way to learn the fundamentals of the very least and exacting science of "applied philanthropy"; they set about to learn the best and most effective means of giving relief, of getting people out of their poverty, of chasing that fitful will of the wisp—"family rehabilitation." And to this end, they worked long and steadily, constantly battling with an enemy often much stronger than they.

But there are many things more or less intangible that the busy trained worker can not do because she has not the time. She sees the need of them, goodness knows, but each time she has to put them off for the more important matters of mere material relief. She has to supply life's necessities, she has to hunt a suitable house to move her family into, when she wants most of all to be helping the tired mother make her miserable little rooms more attractive and

homelike, or when she is longing to get down on the floor, if it's clean enough, and cut out paper dollies for the children. I never go into the home of such a mother without a real ache. I do so want to sit down long enough to hem up some cheap, Swiss curtains for the widows. I always feel that the windows would of necessity be cleaner if there were the Swiss curtains to live up to!

But, pushing these desires back to the impractical place they belong, the worker must keep in mind the "mere essentials." She must go on her way to locate relatives who might be made to do their duty to their poorer relations; she must hurry back to the office to get all her "case work" properly written up. She still feels that the Swiss curtains should be there and that the little bewildered baby should have its paper dollies.

There are many among us who can help the trained worker to realize her ideals. Here is the right kind of volunteer service: for it entails upon the volunteer no expert training, no responsible judgment. Too often the trained person's work is spoiled for all time by the careless handling of a case by an inexperienced person.

One of the speakers in an address before the National Conference of Charities and Correction held recently told of a young girl who started and startled the whole town in which she lived into social work. She was tired, she said, of singing in the church choir and of putting flowers on the church altar. She wanted something real to do; and so she looked around and discovered the need of a hospital for tuberculosis, and having the necessary time and means she immediately put the idea into execution with the result that even before she was aware of it the little town was the richer by a fine sanatorium and the people in the town were awake to the possibilities of individual social service.

With an almost limitless field the volunteer can, like the young girl in the story, put flowers not on the church altar alone, but help in making bloom the waste places of the dirty little streets which unhappily