

EVERY DESCRIPTION OF THE GENTLE SEX ATTEND MONSTER MEETING OF UNEMPLOYED WOMEN

BY JANE WHITAKER

Diffident, and filled with the shame of failure, they entered Cooper Union in New York city the other day, a small army, to attend the first meeting of its kind ever held—a meeting of unemployed women.

They were young and they were old; they were fresh cheeked and they were wrinkled; they were hopeful and they were hopeless; they were still bravely endeavoring to keep up appearances or irretrievably shabby.

There was no soap box oratory. There was no cry of "Down with the capitalist." They didn't ask that anyone be lowered, but only that they might be helped up.

Around the hall were banners with inscriptions: "We have helped enrich the city. What will the city do for us?" "To deny us the right to work is to deny us the right to live."

At first they listened to the speeches of social workers with a weary stolidness, and then one or two became bolder and told their own stories.

Perhaps, if, like the soap box orator, they had striven for effect, they might have left their listeners cold. But they did not care what the rest thought; they only were telling aloud what they had been saying over and over to themselves.

Some of the younger social workers began to cry as the stories went monotonously on, seemingly woven of the same thread by different spinners.

And the tears became choked sobs, that sounded like an accompaniment in major chords on a cello.

"I'm forty-five years old." She was tall, gaunt, with deep circles under her eyes. "I might as well be sixty, because I'm done. I tell you I'm done. I cannot get work. I have lived on \$3 since Christmas, me and my girl. How long is that? God, I don't know. I don't count days by hours any more, but by how much I

suffer, and each day seems a year.

"I go out hunting work all day long and doors are slammed in my face. 'Get along,' they cry to me, 'you are too old.'

"My girl is fifteen. What is the matter with her? She is young, but she hasn't the strength of the old one. She could not stand the hunger. She lies too weak to move because she is starved. And they won't give me work.

"What am I to do? Die like a rat in a trap? Will they let us die if they won't let us live? I don't know. I have tried and there isn't any work."

She sat down and looked around vaguely. A woman suddenly opened her purse and drew out a dollar bill, and other purses emptied a part of their tiny hoards until five dollars had been collected and pressed into the woman's hands.

"It isn't only the old that can't get work." A girl in shabby black looked defiance, while a finger that had forced its way through much darned gloves tried to hide in the palm of her hand which closed over it.

"When they tell you that you're too old, you know what you got to face, but when you're young and everybody says why don't you get a job; when there's lots of jobs advertised in the paper, and you go to the stores and you find it's just a scheme to have a line of applicants appear for the effect it will have on the employes in the establishment, and you've spent car-fare, it's—it's tough."

The stories varied a little; perhaps some of the women had been through harsher experiences than others, but the undercurrent of hopelessness was the same.

"Studying the white slave question, the wonder is that there are not more fallen women," said Rose Schneidermann, vice-president of the Women's Trade Union League.

"This is the first meeting of unem-