

The Torrid Zone of a Big City



Photos by American Press Association.
1.—Cooling off in the river. 2.—Children on the beach. 3.—Who said it's warm? 4.—Helping baby to a drink. 5 and 6.—At the seashore.

Pitiful Hardships Endured by Poverty Row In Spite of Relief Offered by Charity When the Sun's Merciless Rays Beat Down on Helpless Victims,

By JAMES SCHREIBER.

NINETY degrees in the shade and the silvery mercury still rising!

A little girl of twelve sits on the baked flagstone in a partially shaded spot near the doorway of a city tenement. Her haggard, worn features, reddened by the intense heat, radiated in every direction by the blazing ball overhead, would stir the pity of even the most hardened were she in any other part of the city. Here she is passed unnoticed save by a few.

All around her humanity is seeking relief. A boy, half naked, is perched on cakes of ice, coolly oblivious to the sufferings of others about him. Farther down the street a fire hydrant has been let loose and is sending a heavy stream over the heated pavements, while barefooted youngsters are wading in its refreshing waters.

Fire escapes are crowded with children in scant attire, some even in scantier dress than the code of propriety permits. A bed sheet in many instances is serving as a sun shade over otherwise unprotected heads. In the windows on the shady side of the street men and women are sitting, ready to catch and caress each ruffle or breath of air which may come their way, welcome even for a moment.

The Little Mother of the Tenement.

Of all this the weary girl of the tenement is unconscious. The observer will notice traces of tears in her eyes. There is a reason for them, a pathetic reason.

With a sob she rises and drags her steps up countless flights of creaking stairs past sweating people. On the top floor in the alley-like hall she passes numerous doors, entering one which admits her to a room almost bare of furnishings and into which the scorching sunbeams stream unmercifully. It is her home! Six other families are on the same floor. Now the weak cry of an infant is heard. It is her baby brother, who has been sleeping fitfully. He is sick—sick with the heat. Succeeding days of torrid weather have done their work. Motherless from the day of his birth, his "big sister" has become, in the natural course of events, his foster parent. They call her the "little mother."

There are hundreds of her type in the crowded quarters of the poor in our big cities. When the hot weather catches them in its embrace they often lose their little charges.

Charity Offers Relief in Hot Weather.

Charity organizations have now taken these "little mothers" and "their infants" in hand wherever possible, and when the thermometer climbs to the danger point they are shipped off to the beaches around the city or sent on long life giving sails on rivers and lakes.

But this is not all that is being done by charity to make it a little more comfortable for the poor. Large numbers of children and their real mothers are sent to the country for short periods during the heated term.

Yet hot weather takes a heavy toll of life each year. Infant mortality during the summer months is especially high in the sections where the poor congregate. There, too, thousands of people flock to the sidewalks from the sun baked rooms to sit in utter abandonment on chairs or steps, sometimes aimlessly waiting a fan to and fro. If there is a playground in the vicinity it will be crowded with young and old, while benches in the public parks are eagerly sought after if there is a shade tree to act as a protection from the blazing sun.

Public baths are very popular, and along the shores of the rivers, lakes and ocean bathers galore go to find comfort.

Beaches Thick With Bathers.

At the beaches especially swarms of people are always found as the summer nears, but when the weather becomes unbearable in the city they are loaded to overflowing. Bathhouses are at a premium. Where under ordinary conditions you could get accommodations for 25 or 50 cents the price is doubled then, and two or three must use the same quarters.

Gazing along the beach of a seaside resort like Coney Island or Rockaway Beach the eye meets a variety of colors, such as the rainbow itself has never attempted to produce. Out in the water you see several hundred bobbing heads and bodies.

Farther down there are hundreds more. Still farther there are more and more and more till the shore seems to present itself to the beholder as a series of black figures, and they have all fled from the city.

Those who must stay behind and swelter take to drink—that is, they lie themselves to the soda fountains and there tickle their thirst with popular concoctions. The ice cream saloons are numerous both in city and country, but in the former the people appear to thrive on nothing else than those cooling beverages. In certain cities where milk stations have been established by philanthropic persons a thirsty horde is continually gathered, demanding their glassfuls at a cent a drink.

One of the most amusing incidents common to a metropolitan center on a hot day is the small boy taking his bath in the public fountain. He will wade and duck until he is reminded of his transgression by the strong arm of the law in the shape of a big policeman.

Contrastingly distressing is the havoc the sun plays with the work horse. In Chicago several years ago during a spell of severe heat as many as 200 of the animals lay around the streets, having died in a single day. They couldn't be carried away fast enough.

When Evening's Shadows Fall.

When the sun goes down and the evening shadows have fallen over a great city a different scene is presented. Then hundreds of thousands more people have been added to the other throngs which have sought relief during the day. Men and women of the factories, stores and offices have now reached their homes. They have joined those on the sidewalk or have strolled to the parks with the others. Moonlight excursions on the water are popular.

When the temperature and humidity continue to show no consideration and the night air remains sultry sleep is overpowering a tired city. Those who have gone to the parks stretch themselves on the grass rather than go back to uncomfortable beds.

The roofs of houses are also utilized by the sweltering. The writer recalls looking out of an office window in New York last summer, and each morning regularly about 9 o'clock two young men on an adjoining roof would wake up, stretch themselves, roll their sheets and pillows together and disappear down the scuttle. They were in full evening regalia—pajamas.

When the restless multitudes come forth for another twenty-four hours of toil and discomfort and the weather man predicts "No relief today" the newspapers publish a page of news about prostrations, sunstrokes and ice famines.

Hospitals are filled with the stricken, we read. Physicians and nurses then do double duty. Every extra bed is put into service. The clang of the ambulance bell is heard throughout the day as calls come in for first aid to those who have been overcome.

What to Eat, What to Drink.

What to eat and what to drink in hot weather are also given much prominence in the public prints. Meats are generally conceded to be harmful in extremely warm weather, and alcoholic beverages are then tabooed by nearly all physicians. Several years ago, in Chicago, out of nearly 2,000 prostrations a thousand were diagnosed as resulting from overindulgence in intoxicating stimulants as a relief. Cold water is not to be taken too freely, the doctors say. But when King Boreas decides to scorch the city the population goes on its own initiative, and advice is regarded as being for the "other fellow."

BASEBALL GOSSIP

BY "SCOREKEEPER"

Cy Young thinks that Joe Birmingham, Cleveland's manager, will be another Fielder Jones. The aforesaid fielder piloted the White Sox, then the hitless wonders, to the world title. Young believes that "Birmy" will be much the same sort of a heady manager that Jones was.

"Birmingham exercises judgment like Jones," says the veteran pitcher. "He has an ideal personality, and I can't conceive of any fellow who has a decent disposition being antagonistic to him."

"His knowledge of baseball and its tricks is so extraordinary as to be at times uncanny. He has a fine, intelligent class of fellows to deal with. His experience and training have fitted him to obtain the best possible results."

Leonard, the southpaw pitcher of the Red Sox, pulled a new one recently when he was getting wild. He threw his glove to the bench, and a new one was given him. That is a new alibi. It was the fault of the glove.

Young Acosta is only sixteen years old, but has signed with Clark Griffith, manager of the Senators. He is the most youthful athlete in the big leagues. His home is in Havana. He is an outfielder.

Believing that all the umpires in the American league have been instructed to be strict with him, Clark Griffith has sworn off arguing with them, and he even has gone so far as to get a suit of clothes that he will not get put off the field all season.

There has been much discussion concerning the trade of Devore, Groh and Ames to Cincinnati for Pitcher Fromme. On the face of it Tinker seems to have gained the advantage in getting three men for one. But McGraw is a foxy trader, and he wanted Fromme, who is one of the best pitchers in the business when he is good. To get the man he had to give a shade that looks as if the margin is in the Cincinnati club's favor.

Fromme had been uniformly successful against the New York Giants. He shut them out recently, and he has been pitching good ball all the season behind a team that could not help him out. With the Giants Fromme will have a team of run getters to assist

him on his victorious way. He is no spring chicken, but the Giants, the way they are placed just now, cannot take chances on a twirler who is inexperienced.



Photo by American Press Association.
Fromme, the Giants' New Pitcher, in Action.

The Sunday School Class

SENIOR BEREAN LESSON.

Golden Text.—Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted (Matt. v. 4).

Verses 1-5.—A defiant refusal.

"To be forewarned is to be forearmed." Moses was prepared for the experiences that he would encounter. He knew that the struggle would be intense before he could free the people. He was not going into this ministry blindfolded. The vision at Horeb had not only enlightened him as to his duty, but he was also empowered for the performance of that duty. The people of Israel received Moses and Aaron, his brother, with readiness. They were filled with gratitude when they heard that the God of their fathers was about to visit them with deliverance. They also responded to the appeal with reverence and submission.

* * * The real battle, however, was to begin when Moses put in his plea to Pharaoh. "Thus saith the Lord." He was not speaking on his own authority, but in the name of Jehovah, the God of his people, who had manifested himself to the fathers and now desired that their children of this later day should do honor to him. "Hold a feast unto me." This feast was doubtless at a sanctuary to which pilgrimage had to be made. It was not a pretext to get away, beyond the reach of Pharaoh and altogether leave his dominions. It would have been absurd for Moses to request openly and outright that the people should be allowed to leave the country. He would take one step at a time. If Pharaoh gave them permission to offer worship to their God "according to the dictates of their conscience," then it would be appropriate to make negotiations for further favors. "Who is the Lord?" The reply is marked by contempt and disdain. This attitude of pride and scorn was ultimately to bring unspeakable disaster to Pharaoh and his people.

"I will not let Israel go." This is emphatic and final, but Pharaoh was to find out to his own bitterness that he could not dismiss the Eternal God nor his people in so abrupt a way. "Three days' journey." This was probably a current expression for a considerable distance. "The wilderness." Driver states that this was "the broad and arid limestone plateau, now called et-Tih, extending from the east border of Egypt to the south of Palestine and bounded on the south by the mountains of the Sinai peninsula." Consult the map. "Lest he fall upon us." The neglect of their religious duty

would be visited by severe punishment. "With the sword." Goshen was exposed to attacks from desert tribes. "Pestilence" and war were two of the judgments of Jehovah (11 Sam. xxiv. 13; Ezek. xiv. 21). "Wherefore do ye?" Pharaoh speaks under the impression that Moses and Aaron are disturbers of the people, as though they were wild and reckless demagogues, giving the people false ideas of liberty and under the pretext of a religious feast planning to have a holiday. * * * "The people" * * * "are now many." The king sees in the numbers of the aliens a source of danger. "Rest from their burdens." If they become idle they will probably join in a rebellion and become dangerous to the land.

Verses 6-9. Exacting tasks.

The persistence of Moses and Aaron annoyed Pharaoh, and he determined to make them feel the power of his mighty hand. "Taskmasters." These overseers or superintendents of forced labor were Egyptians who had no sympathy with the labor gangs. "Officers." These subordinates were Israelites who had immediate supervision of the laborers. "Straw to make brick." Egyptian bricks were made out of the black Nile mud, which was mixed with sand and chopped straw or waste stubble. They were not burned, but dried in the sun. "Tale of the bricks." "Number of the bricks" provision. "Ye shall not diminish ought thereof." The instructions were given that no straw should henceforth be furnished. They must find it themselves, and yet, regardless of the time that would needs be spent in gathering this material, the required amount of bricks must not be reduced. * * * Pharaoh instructed his men to pursue the mistaken policy of force, which has never succeeded. * * *

Verses 10-14. Ground down. * * *

It was not an easy matter to obtain stubble except after the harvest, and it is very probable that very little of this was available. They were certainly in a bad plight and did not feel kindly toward Moses and Aaron (verses 20, 21). "The officers of the children of Israel." These were the men directly responsible for the supply of the bricks, and when it was not forthcoming as heretofore they were made to pay the penalty and "were beaten." This was not all. It was insisted that they should furnish the regular daily quota of bricks. "Wherefore have ye not fulfilled?" This was a begging of the question, but tyrants have never been known to be reasonable.