The Curse of Poverty

"We often hear some long-faced, Daniel
signed-to-a-needle," person say solemnly, "What
a blessing, in poverty, and what a curse in wealth." They
are the people who speak with disdain of the
"almighty dollar," the "filthy lucre," which is the
root of all evil, but they lose the jungle of those
same dollars as well as their neighbors, and
many of them would hold on to a little,
dirty, copper cent till the very Indian on
ithowled from pain.

After all, is it not the want of the "almighty
dollar" that is the root of all evil rather
than the presence of it? Is it not the in-
tense longing to possess rather than the
possession which causes so much
crime and anarchy? And, is it not more
than all, the necessity of the anxious wary
against the insidious wants of the few?
What is there that so undermines a man as the
right of a lady dressed in the richest silk
and heaviest fur as when his own poor wife
has hardly enough clothing to cover her
shivering limbs, and every thread in her thin
garment counts so much of the oil,
and sacrifice she has made somehow
to obtain the little that she has?
I would make a distinction between poor and poverty. The poor means to have a little; you can call your own, perhaps, an employment that brings returns sufficient by careful planning to meet the wants of each day; but poverty means to be without sufficient food and clothing, to be hungry and cold, to be weakened by excessive exposure and so ready to contract any disease that may be prevalent. It means to live without any of the pleasures in life and to die unremembered for and unknewen. What more is there in life worth living for?

Poverty may come upon any one, and no almost any one. A man may work hard, and work all the time, but no matter what he does he cannot get ahead; he gets back instead—a little this year, a little more added next year—and so on until he has passed through being poor to actual poverty. Suppose he is a farmer—knock hard—everyone knows how a farmer must work—and just as he is getting startedeward one of his best horses dies; his corn dries up and is nothing but chaff, or maybe his wife gets sick and he cannot
spend all he has saved to pay a doctor's bill or he is a labourer in town, he has deposited his small earnings, but perhaps he is temporarily disabled and loses his position, and goes on from one boss to another and is left without money or a chance to get any.

Some people are poor and will always be not from any apparent fault of theirs but because they seem to have been picked out by Providence to be poor and miserable and nothing can ameliorate otherwise.

We might see, if we looked along the streets of some of our large cities, little serious, sad faced children, hardly old enough to talk plainly, walking along in the early morning to work in one of the great factories. Then the frail little creatures side by side with another all often kinsmen and grandmother; dig in their struggle for food and shelter and clothing, when others of their age have scarcely left the cradle! The responsibilities of life are placed to them early, and they become jaded and at times from lack of food and from confinement in close, suffocating and
hope that would kill a strong man in time, and not a long time either. Beside these little creatures there are wives and sharps drifting about the streets without home or employment and nothing they can call their own but hunger, cold, and murder. The miserable den in which in the only place they have ever known as home, is so distasteful, even to them who have never known what home amount, that they seek crime in order to have a better sleeping place in the station house. Thousands whose only crime is their own home, no friends and no money, are too proud to ask for charity, and die like a poor drunk creature in some uninfrequent corner of the city. Thousands more are shut out from the land of Charity because some one has imposed on generosity, and the hand that would give does not, for it can not know whether it is giving to true poverty or an impostor.

Can one wonder at the crime committed in the world when we see starvation staring in the face of many people
to whose course speak a kind mind, whom none wish to employ, and none will give the necessities of life! And is it such a crime to take from those living in opulence a little of their fortune and place it where it will save the lives of all that is dear on earth? I have but to consider the motives that have prompted me to steal, the hatred and fear for the offense will be tempered by the pity we feel for the offender.

Suppose a case in point; a frail, delicate woman with three small children is left a widow; her husband was accidentally killed while constructing a bridge, and left her but little money to provide for her family. She had never worked outside her own home, and was too frail to take up any task that would call for great exertion or close confinement; yet her children cannot be fed and clothed. She got a little plain sewing and by an close application as she endure, managed to make fifty cents a day. How could she keep herself and these children on that! She soon found
she was getting behind, but she could do nothing else. How telling was the one present
to contend against thought in her mind! One
night, after having at last gotten the children
asleep, she hunger made them wakeful, she walked out of the house and down the
street till she came in front of a large
pleasant looking house, not extravagantly
but more than comfortably furnished.
What was it urged her to steal in and take
whatever would best serve her in her
great need? Surely it was not the mere
love of gain! She was starving, and more
than that, the children were crying for
bread which she could not give them. The
world would look on and allow her to do it...
stand back at respectful distance and call
her thief, a miserable serving creature fit
subject to thing before stern justice. But
who can say her another was not good, her
pride not honorable? Who can say that
her reward hereafter will be less than
some who held up their hands in horror at
the sacrifice she made!

Every day, men and women die in
the streets of our cities because they have no
tread to put in their mouths, one roof to cover their heads, and clothing to protect their bodies. Men and women, every day, are one step lower in civilization, one step nearer a pandæmonium or a miserable creature, some forgotten have not even heard of the world beyond, but pass to that haven from which no traveler returns; there to receive their reward or punishment. Who can say they have not filled their place in this world, that it is not better for their having lived in it? Who can say that their cross has been a heavy one, their burden not a light one? We can not help pitying them, nor wondering why they could not have been better prepared to battle with the world, better prepared to fill their place in the world, but, aware whatever sin, sin night, or fault, yet we cannot help thinking low cannot happen. They might be seen", "said there cross been easier, their burden lighter.

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