

It was Sunday, March 4, 1894. Julia had been sick for one week. She was just 9 years old. And had lived in the Chicago area with her widowed mother, and brothers John, Joseph, Frank, Anton and Michael. John had a wife, Agnes, and the couple had 2 daughters—Julia (b. July 23, 1888), and Mary (b. June 25, 1891). Also their son Joseph, who was born at sea in 1893, was nearly one year old.

The family was living in Chicago on Ewing Street. Internet research shows Chicago's "Poverty Flat," a big double tenement on Ewing Street. "The tenement was well named: dirty, ill-kept, evidences of neglect, slovenliness, unthrift in every angle, every window pane. It was fit for nothing but to tear down."

In his *Autobiography*, Riis delivered the ultimate judgement of condemnation of Chicago's West Side slum: "For never was parody upon Christian charity more corrupting to human mind and soul than the frightful abomination of the police lodging-house, sole provision made by the municipality for its homeless wanderers. Within a year I have seen the process in full operation in Chicago, have heard a sergeant in the Harrison Street Station there tell me, when my indignation found vent in angry words, that they cared less for those men and women than for the cur dogs in the street." bjb

<https://maxwellhalsted.uic.edu/home/chicago-dark-grotesque-slum-lawless/story-of-the-slum/>

At another place we found a white family, a sick woman lay on the bed; the room was in the usual disorder. The husband sat near, with whom I talked. He told of how hard he had tried to make an honest living; that he did shun the saloons and gambling dens; and spent much of his spare time in the mission reading rooms. I gave him some tracts and papers to read at home while he had to stay with his sick wife.

About the time our Industrial School was dismissed, I saw the two Arabian men come in the room with the children I had found on Clark Street the Thursday before. It was a bitter cold day, I think one of the severest we had last winter, and the baby of two years had on only a thin dress, a light short under garment

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not the sign of a stocking on the feet, only a pair of slippers. I could not describe how dirty they were. If you were to visit with me some Thursday afternoon in the Black Hole and see some of the homes and their inmates, you would have some idea of the condition of these two children. But just now we could not stop to think of soap and water, because they were almost frozen. They were so stiff with cold that another one of the young ladies and myself took them and rubbed the little numb bodies till we gradually got them warm, and then we took them to the fire. It was a terrible scene to witness. Our hearts ached within us as we pressed the little stiff hands and feet in our own hands to bring them back to warmth again, and our tears fell fast as we thought of their suffering. I did want a bathtub and soap and water so much to wash them [end page 78] clean for once before putting clothes on them, but I was not supplied with these articles at that time. Kind friends had already supplied us with boxes and barrels of clothing, so selecting some we dressed them in good warm garments. A warm wrap was pinned around the little baby and boy. It made us happy as we stood by and knew that they were dressed warm. How they all

appreciated what was done for them! Then after they had sat down by the fire for some time we sent them home. "Inasmuch as ye did it unto the least of these my brethren ye did it unto me."

The next day I went down on Clark Street to see the Arabian family. The day before when they had come to our mission, they had left at home a little girl of ten years, who was very sick. The mother had been gone into the country for four or five weeks, peddling, and had just got back the day before I was there, and was almost wild with grief at the condition of her child. She could speak only two or three words in English. I shall never forget that look of unutterable anguish on that mother's face, as with her motions and signs she tried to tell me her child was dying. Then I pitied her, and tried to show her that I knew, and sympathized with her. There was no bed in the room. The little sufferer lay on an old piece of bed tick, and with only dirty rags thrown over her. I knelt down on the pile of rags beside the sick child, and saw from all appearances that she could not live long, and then I turned to comfort the poor mother, but how could I do it? I felt it was beyond human power to do this, as she could not understand the words I spoke if I were to talk to her of the divine One who could alone comfort her. But she did understand the sympathetic touch as I placed my hand on her, and she would look up into my face, as much as to say, "I know you are my friend," as she would kiss [end page 79] my hand and kiss it over and over again; and then she would lay her hands on the face of her child again she would throw them upwards and in the most pleading tone cry, Allah! Allah! I felt so helpless to do anything for her. I could only shed tears with her as I knelt with her beside the pile of rags on which her child lay.

After some time the child rallied, and was taken to the hospital, but only lived a short time. When I went back to see about them, they told me that the child was dead and the family had moved away.

And then in my thoughts, I was in Palestine, from where these people had just come only a few months before. And He who administered to suffering people like these, was brought before my mind, and a prayer went up from my heart that I might be more like Him and find the suffering ones around me.

- **Typical Chicago Tenement Court and Children's Playground-Ewing St. Near Halsted (1906)**

<http://spearspat.blogspot.com/search/label/19th%20century%20Chicago>

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