

# **THE FORGOTTEN ARMY**

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The Forgotten Army by Various

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**VARIOUS**

**THE FORGOTTEN  
ARMY**



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# THE FORGOTTEN ARMY

SIX YEARS' WORK OF THE  
COMMITTEE ON CRIMINAL COURTS OF THE  
CHARITY ORGANIZATION SOCIETY  
OF THE CITY OF NEW YORK  
1911-1917

A story of its work for the clean, intelligent  
and kindly administration of our  
Inferior Criminal Courts

U.S.  
997  
CITY

**E**ARLY in the second year of the Great War America awoke in a wide movement for adequate national defense. The first large public demonstration was New York City's stupendous preparedness parade. From nine o'clock in the morning till nine o'clock at night troop after troop passed up Fifth Avenue until the best estimates had placed the number at one hundred and fifty thousand. More wanted to march but the day was not long enough.

At the same time that this great wave of patriotism and devotion to our national ideals was surging up the avenue, another procession, a never ending one, was on its slow and straggling march. It was a part of that constant stream of misery, misfortune, ignorance and vice that passes through our criminal courts at the rate of 240,000 cases a year. This procession is in dark contrast to the demonstration for patriotic public defense.

If some evil genius could, like a pied piper, draw together in one ordered review all of the 240,000 that frequented our courts last year and lead them up Fifth Avenue for us to view as we viewed our preparedness parade we would be appalled!

Let imagination picture the evil genius leading this procession. But let us observe the rank and file following brazenly or in shame, in evil abandon or in despair, in stumbling ignorance or with conscious evil intent.

At the head are those whom the press and the sensational character of their crimes have brought to

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public attention. They have been drawn by our piper from the murderer's grave, from the steps of the electric chair, from the burglar's, the embezzler's, briber's and blackmailer's prison cells. They are only a few, but of the whole endless procession they are the only ones that have commanded public attention.

Our seat on the reviewing stand must be comfortable if we review the whole of this ill-starred procession, for it will last longer than from nine o'clock in the morning until nine at night. The first rays of the dawn of the following day will be breaking over the buildings on the opposite side of the street before the last troop will have passed before us.

As hour passes into each succeeding hour neither hunger, thirst, nor fatigue diverts us. We are fascinated by the spectacle. Here are displayed to us the fruits of evil purpose, recklessness, thoughtless mistakes, ignorance, bad heredity, social injustice, greed and vice. It seems the panorama of misdirected existence.

We have plenty of time to analyze each group as it passes by.

The second battalion is made up of a swaggering, reckless crew of petty disturbers of the public peace. Some have blood-stained shirts, others bandaged heads or bruised faces. They are the kind that 'know it all', that can be told nothing; some bear the marks of intoxication, others those of brute indulgence. They try judicial patience, they exasperate the police seeking to restore order without arrest. Some are good workmen, but always out of a job, some are worthless idlers, others are generally steady with sprees of lawlessness as their one luxury. There are men of all nationalities—a cosmopolitan brotherhood of lawlessness.

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Here is a shame-faced troop among the rest. In a moment of annoyance or semi-intoxication they have lost control of their hair-trigger tempers. They are honestly sorry and are appalled by the first serious consequence of their moments of weakness.

Here are dogmatic, set-faced individuals walking two and two glowering at each other. An honest difference of opinion without the saving grace of humor has brought them to blows. Each will always think the other the offending party.

This division ends with a hilarious lot of youngsters whose animal spirits have brought them to the police station.

Now for nearly two hours the victims of intemperance pass by. The first that come into view are a respectable looking lot with all the marks of the law-abiding citizen. They are the ones who though otherwise good citizens have their yearly or monthly fling and for this once only have they brought upon themselves the disgrace of arrest for public intoxication. They are ashamed or boastfully proud of their escapades. There are the young, foolhardy boys. There are those over-confident fellows of all classes who have always boasted that they never got to the state where they couldn't get home. There are the honest workmen and mechanics who stayed one drink too long over the friendly bar on their way home Saturday night. They have sought in the saloons the diversion, companionship and entertainment denied them in their crowded, slovenly homes.

After half an hour the aspect of those in the procession gradually changes. The marks of dissolute and intemperate lives are shown in the physical unwholesomeness of features. Intermittent intemperance is

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drifting into habitual dissipation. We are beginning to note the vacant, lack-luster eyes. Soiled collars, stringy neckties, a peculiar growing unkemptness of dress indicates to all but themselves how far they have travelled the path toward habitual drunkenness.

Then come the hopeless drunkards whom only dearth of money keeps from perpetual intoxication. There are those of self-willed debauchery whose reputable families have striven in vain to save from shame. There are the weak, the simple-minded, whose only strength is desire for drink. There are their stronger companions whose drunkenness is only a part of their many-sided sensuality. Last come the stragglers—unowned derelicts drifting from the park bench to the saloon, to the workhouse and back; incoherent in speech except when begging for a drink. In the haze of their painracked and dulled sensibilities they have arrived at the absolute of intemperance and self-indulgence—their final goal.

We have watched this long weary procession of drunkenness—brought here by chance, by bad associations, by weakness, by sorrow, by overstrain, by idleness, by losses, by over-confidence, by choice or by ignorance. The division ends.

But who are these following? The shifty eyes, the sleek, cunning hypocrisy of bearing reveal the schooled criminal with conscious evil purpose. They are the pickpockets and the 'jostlers'. These wolves of the crowds make their living from the money snatched out of women's handbags or cunningly cut or filched from men's persons.

In close association with the pickpocket comes the burglar, the thug, the gangster, that new product of

our slum frontier. Blustering, over-confident in their bullying and swaggering bravado or slinking meanly along, reflecting the nature of their exploits, they pass before us. Some are old in crime plainly showing the marks of prison service. It has obviously not gone well with them; they look cowed and hopeless. Others with a measure of success have 'beat' the game and still walk with reckless confidence.

Following are the young disciples in wrongdoing. They are graduates of the street corner and cheap club room schools of crime. Their ignorance and idleness more than their perversity have been their undoing. There is much of good in them yet; they have started wrongly. Right influences might put them right.

The assortment of irresponsible individuals that from now on for nearly an hour claims our attention has joined the procession through the doorway of the Domestic Relations Court. They are wife deserters and non-supporting fathers. Also among the number can be found a smaller group of sons and daughters who have forgotten or ignored the duty resting upon them to care for their aged parents.

Many of these men, weakened by indulgence in drink or lust or simply discouraged by unemployment or sickness in the family, have grown insensible to the moral and legal obligation resting upon them for the maintenance of their wives and children or their fathers and mothers until at last their dependents, driven to the point of desperation, have appealed to the court for relief. Many of these men love their families but have simply become careless and selfish.

Then follow those whom jealousy of other men, justly grounded or unjustly alleged, has given the excuse for

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shirking the family responsibilities. Some are honest-faced fellows whom cankering jealousy has driven to desertion as a last resort. Their faces are bitter, disillusioned, sorrowful. They are willing to support their children but their manhood revolts at harboring an unfaithful wife.

The next troop, a body of substantial looking business men, are surprising to us. They hardly look like criminals. They are property owners brought to court by inspectors of the Labor Department and other departments having to do with safety of buildings for factory workers. They are the owners of properties that have by recent legislation required alteration to make them legally safe and fit, or men who in erecting buildings have failed to comply with the law's requirements. Most of these are honest, well intentioned citizens with no criminal intent who often correct the errors before the court finds it necessary to exact punishment.

Following are some who for the most part are honest, respectable looking folk. They are men of all ages, youths and women, largely foreigners. They are violators of petty ordinances. They are those who have been found littering up the parks with papers, women who have let their dogs loose in the parks, youths and those of older years who have torn branches from trees or shrubbery.

Others are janitors and janitresses who have violated some street cleaning or health ordinance like mixing garbage in the same can with ashes. Here is a troop of foot-sore Italians and other poor laborers who in their over-thriftiness have used street car transfers illegally. Here is a crowd upon whose faces indignation and shamefacedness are rivals. They have been called