

CHARITIES PUBLICATION COMMITTEE

# The Negro in the Cities of the North

*The Survey*



- 1—The Italian in America, May, 1904
- 2—The Slav in America, December, 1904
- 3—The Negro in the Cities of the North, October, 1905

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**THE CHARITY ORGANIZATION SOCIETY**

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- EMIGRATION FROM THE SOUTH—THE WOMEN** Frances A. Kellor 11
- Miss Kellor is general director of the Intermunicipal Committee on Household Research, an organization devoted to the study of industrial problems of women. Author of *Experimental Sociology*, a study of crime among women of the Southern prison system; and of *Out of Work*, the results of an investigation of the employment agencies in this country. Miss Kellor is identified with the New York and Philadelphia Associations for the Protection of Negro Women, and with the enactment and enforcement of the New York state employment agency law.
- SOME CAUSES OF NEGRO EMIGRATION—THE MEN** Carl Kelsey 15
- Associate professor of sociology, University of Pennsylvania, assistant director of the New York School of Philanthropy. Dr. Kelsey was superintendent of the Aid Department, Illinois Children's Home and Aid Society, 1890-1901. Ph. D., University of Pennsylvania, 1903; author of *The Negro Farmer*, 1904.
- SHOULD NEGRO BUSINESS MEN GO SOUTH** Booker T. Washington 17
- Principal Tuskegee Normal and Industrial Institute since 1881. Graduate of Hampton Institute, 1875; A. M., Harvard, 1896; LL. D., Dartmouth, 1901. Author of *Up from Slavery*, 1901; *Character Building*, 1902; *Story of My Life and Work*, 1903; president of the National Negro Business Men's League, etc.
- KOWALIGA: A COMMUNITY WITH A PURPOSE** William E. Benson 22
- Mr. Benson is son of the founder of Kowaliga community and schools; a graduate of Howard University, bringing to the practical enterprises of his father a wide cultural outlook and definite social study. Address *Manual Training as Preventive of Delinquency Among Colored Children*, National Conference of Charities, 1904.
- THE NEGRO HOME IN NEW YORK** Mary White Ovington 25
- Miss Ovington holds a fellowship under the Committee on Social Research, Greenwich House, to investigate conditions among the Negroes. She has been engaged in this work for fourteen months. From 1895 to 1903 she was head-worker at the Greenpoint Settlement of Pratt Institute Neighborhood Association of Brooklyn.
- THE BLACK VOTE OF PHILADELPHIA** W. E. Burghardt DuBois 31
- Professor of economics and history at Atlanta University. Graduate Fisk University, 1888; Harvard, 1890; A. M., 1891; Ph. D., 1895. Author of *The Philadelphia Negro*, *The Soul of the Black Folk*, and several studies of the Negro. Dr. DuBois is general secretary of the Niagara Movement recently instituted to maintain the civil and political rights of the colored men of America.
- INDUSTRIAL CONDITIONS AMONG NEGRO MEN; BOSTON** John Daniels 35
- Holder of the Harvard fellowship, South End House, Boston, giving several years' study to the conditions of the Negroes in Boston. A. B., 1903; A. M., 1904, and now working for his doctorate.
- SOCIAL BONDS IN THE BLACK BELT; CHICAGO** Fannie B. Williams 40
- Frederick Douglass Social Center, Chicago. Mrs. Williams is the wife of S. Laing Williams, member of the Chicago Bar. Graduate of the Collegiate Department of the State Normal School, Brockport, N. Y., and of a special course in art and music at the New England Conservatory, Boston. Author of newspaper and magazine articles on social life of colored people. Mrs. Williams is the only colored woman who has ever been admitted to membership of the Chicago Women's Club.
- SOME CAUSES OF CRIMINALITY** J. H. N. Waring 45
- Dr. Waring is principal of the Colored High and Training School of Baltimore, was born in Michigan, taking his degrees A. M. and M. D. at Harvard University. For twenty-three years Dr. Waring taught in Washington, D. C., schools, during twelve of which he was supervisor.
- NEGRO DEPENDENCE IN BALTIMORE** Helen B. Pendleton 50
- Miss Pendleton is a native of West Virginia and taught in the schools there before coming to Baltimore, where she has been an agent of the Charity Organization Society for about nine years. On her native heath and in Baltimore she has had abundant opportunity to observe the Negroes and has done much good work among them.

157652



## CONTENTS—CONTINUED

- THE NEGRO TO-DAY IN MUSIC** James W. Johnson 58  
 Member of the partnership of Cole & Johnson, music composers, consisting of Rosamond Johnson and Bob Cole and the author of this article, who writes most of the lyrics. Mr. Johnson is a graduate of Atlanta University, and at present a graduate student at Columbia University, New York.
- SOME MISSION SKETCHES** 59  
 The New York Colored Mission was in its inception a Quaker philanthropy, and its traditions of modest kindness find an echo in the insistence on the part of the writer of these sketches that they be printed unsigned.
- SOCIAL SETTLEMENT IN WASHINGTON** Sarah Collins Fernandis 64  
 Resident worker of the Social Settlement, 118 N street S. W. Mrs. Fernandis is a graduate of Hampton Institute, a teacher of several years' experience in the schools of the American Missionary Association in the South, in Hampton Institute, and in Baltimore, Md.
- THE NEGRO PRESS IN AMERICA** L. M. Hershaw 66  
 Mr. Hershaw is in the government service at Washington, and is a correspondent of Negro journals.
- THE NEGRO IN TIMES OF INDUSTRIAL UNREST** R. R. Wright 69  
 Pastor of Trinity Mission, located among the poorest immigrant Negroes in Chicago. Mr. Wright is son of the well-known president of the State College of Georgia—the father of the same name being the "We-se-a-risin'" Wright of Whittier's poem. The son's degrees include A. M. and B. D., and he has been a student in the Universities of Berlin and Leipzig, and has recently been appointed fellow of the College Settlements Association to study conditions among Negroes in Philadelphia.
- IN THE DAY'S WORK OF THE VISITING NURSE** Jessie C. Sleet 73  
 Miss Sleet is visiting nurse of the New York Charity Organization Society. At present she is making special investigations of tuberculosis among Negro city dwellers under the tuberculosis committee. She is a graduate of the Training School for Nurses in connection with Provident Hospital, Chicago.
- THE CHURCH AND ITS SOCIAL WORK, ST. MARK'S** Maud K. Griffin 75  
 Miss Griffin has been engaged in newspaper work in New York for seven years, acting as correspondent for a number of leading newspapers throughout the United States and Canada. She is secretary of Hope Day Nursery, and associated with several movements devoted to bettering the conditions of colored people in New York city.
- THE SCHOOL AS A SOCIAL CENTER** W. L. Bulkeley 76  
 Dr. Bulkeley is principal of public school No. 80, Borough of Manhattan. Ph. D., Syracuse University; a former student at Strassburg and Paris. Dr. Bulkeley taught Latin and Greek in Claflin University, Orangeburg, S. C., for fifteen years, and for the past six years has been in public school work in New York.
- COURT STUDIES FROM LIFE** Lucy F. Friday 79  
 Miss Friday has been in charge of probation work in Baltimore since the opening of the juvenile court under Judge Heuveler in June, 1902. Graduated from Wellesley in 1887; student at the University of Leipzig, 1895-1896; author of several articles on probation work.
- CHILDREN OF THE CIRCLE** Helena Titus Emerson 81  
 A kindergartener and settlement worker under the Mary F. Walton Free Kindergarten and Industrial Work for Colored Children. Special student at Bryn Mawr for two years; graduate of Miss Walton's Kindergarten Training School; carried on special investigation for two years among the Negroes of New York city under Professor Giddings of Columbia University.
- MANUAL TRAINING FOR NEGRO CHILDREN** David E. Gordon 84  
 The writer of this article is principal of the L'Ouverture School, St. Louis. The manual training work in the public schools of St. Louis has set a high standard for the rest of the country since Professor Woodward, the superintendent, raised the now famous cry, "Send the whole boy to school."
- THE NEGRO AND THE DEMANDS OF MODERN LIFE** Franz Boas 85  
 Franz Boas, anthropologist, sailed June, 1883, to Cumberland Sound, Baffin's Land; assistant, Royal Ethnographical Museum, Berlin, and docent of geography, University of Berlin, 1885-1886; went to British Columbia to study Indians, and carried on investigations for British Association for the Advancement of Science, and after 1897 for American Museum of Natural History, New York; directed operations and publications, Jesup North Pacific Expedition; docent of anthropology, Clark University, 1888-1892; chief assistant, Department of Anthropology, World's Columbian Exposition; professor anthropology, Columbia University, 1898; assistant curator, 1896; curator, 1901; Department Anthropology, American Museum Natural History.
- THE COUNTRY AT LARGE** Thomas Jesse Jones 88  
 At present Dr. Jones is studying the Negro problem and directing the sociological work at Hampton Institute. Ph. D. fellow in Sociology of Columbia University; B. D., Union Seminary; also acting head-worker of University Settlement, New York city. Author of *Sociology of a New York City Block*, in the Columbia University Political Science series.



# The Negro in Times of Industrial Unrest

R. R. Wright, Jr.

Trinity Mission, Chicago

The scope of this paper is limited to the local situation in Chicago. The writer has for six years observed conditions among workmen in this, the most rapidly growing Negro city population in the country, a population which in the last forty years has increased twice as rapidly as the total population of Chicago, and sixteen times as rapidly as the total Negro population of the country.

The question of earning a living—how to get a job and how to hold a job—is the most serious and most difficult question now confronting the Chicago Negro. He must work where he can rather than where he will. Times of industrial unrest, of which there are many in this city, have often offered to him opportunities for work which were before closed. The three most significant instances of such unrest in which Negroes had conspicuous part were the building trades' strike of 1900, the stockyards' strike of 1904, and the teamsters' strike of 1905. Prior to 1900, Negroes played but little part in the industrial situation on account of the smallness of the Negro population.

## *The Building Trades' Strike.*

During 1899 and early 1900 one of the most powerful labor organizations in Chicago was that of the building trades, which controlled almost absolutely the building situation in the city. Over against them, however, was the growing organization of building contractors, slowly preparing to meet the labor men. The contractors were the aggressors in the struggle which began February 5, 1900, against what they called the "tyranny" of the Building Trades' Council, which had prohibited the use of machinery, and apprentices, and "made possible the limitation of a man's work to one-half his capacity." The contractors held in brief that there should be no limitation of work, no restriction upon the use of machinery or tools, an eight-hour day at fifty cents per hour, one and one-half pay for overtime, and double pay for Sundays, a com-

mittee on arbitration, and a three-years' agreement.

Up to this time Negroes had done but little work in the building trades. The unions in order to limit competition had not seen fit to invite them to join, and had in many instances refused, by black-balling, Negroes who presented themselves for membership. Most of the Negroes, therefore, who had come from the South with their trades, found it easier and quite as lucrative to go into domestic and personal service. Some gave up their trades, and others alternated between waiters' work and porters' work, and doing the odd jobs in their line which came to them as non-union men.

The boycott of the building contractors was followed by a general strike of the building trades, and this was the opportunity of the non-union laborer, and along with him of the Negro. The strike lasted all the summer and the number of Negroes increased until they were an important issue. There was, however, no wholesale importation from the South. On one of the largest buildings in the city, the Mandel Department Store, a large number of Negroes were employed, and their presence caused much violence, despite police protection. Violence, however, did not frighten the Negroes, and more peaceful means were used. The Chicago Federation of Labor, representing all the organized labor bodies of the city, issued an appeal to the Negroes, which because of its significance is given here:

The frequency with which unscrupulous employers of labor are of late supplanting white men by their colored brethren in times of industrial troubles is a question of most serious moment to the wage-earners of this country. In calling attention to this question it is not our intention to arouse sentiment which might lead to race prejudice, or a race war, which would be deplorable in its results, but rather in a friendly spirit to lay before our colored brethren a statement of facts which we hope may convince them of their error. . . . We do not even condemn them, believing they are more justly entitled to our sympathy and support. In the slavery days, now happily gone by.



when the traffic in human flesh and blood remained a blot on our civilization, the Negro was unable to free himself from the bondage. His white brother rose in arms and declared that the slave should be free. To-day the Negro is being used to keep the white man in industrial slavery. The colored man, more simple in his ways, with fewer wants and these more easily satisfied, is contented to work under conditions which are irksome to the white workman, and he is to-day, perhaps unconsciously, being used to try to drag the white man down to a level lower than was the Negro before he was freed from slavery.

It is to remedy this that we appeal to him, to welcome him into our fold, to elevate him to our standard and to better his condition as well as our own. The trades-union movement knows no race or color. Its aims are the bettering of the condition of the wage-earner, whatever his color or creed. In this spirit we appeal to the colored workman to join us in our work. Come into our trades unions, give us your assistance and in return, receive our support, so that race hatred may be forever buried, and the workers of the country united in a solid phalanx to demand what we are justly entitled to—a fair share of the fruits of our industry.

This appeal was taken seriously by many Negroes, who left the ranks of strike-breakers to join the unions. Some of these indeed became so zealous for the cause of unionism, that they even tried the persuasion of violence upon other members of their race, when words were not found strong enough to stop them from work.

The strike ended in the fall, the Building Trades' Council was disrupted, and the unions left in a weak condition. But in the recuperation many more Negroes were among the membership of the unions than before. Of these the Negro membership of the hod-carriers was especially strong, for in this kind of work the Negroes had been the strongest competitors.

#### *The Stock Yards' Strike.*

The next great struggle in which Negroes were engaged was the stockyards' strike.

On Tuesday, July 12, nearly fifty thousand men, many of whom were Negroes, stopped work at the command of Michael Donnelly, president of the Amalgamated Meat Cutters and Butcher Workmen, who had organized the stockyards' unions and who conducted the strike. The grounds for the strike were the refusal of the packers to grant to the unskilled men a

minimum wage of eighteen and one-half cents per hour, and an equalization of the wages of skilled men. The strike was general in the West and involved all the large houses. Ten days later, however, the packers and labor men came to a tentative agreement. On July 23, the men applied for their former positions. But in a few hours they were called out again, as it was charged that the packers discriminated in hiring the old men. Thus began a second strike, which was to continue nearly two months. The packers determined to break the strike after the efforts at peace failed. To do this they turned to the Negroes. For more than twenty years there had been Negroes employed in the stockyards. Both Mr. Armour and Mr. Swift were friendly to them. There had been but little premeditated effort to break the strike, and in recruiting strike-breakers there was very little system. Employment agencies, private individuals, "runners," and others, scoured the city. Thousands of Negroes were imported and in a few days more than ten thousand Negroes were in the various plants. Lodging-houses, commissaries, and pleasure rooms were hastily provided; Negroes were eager to seize the situation.

A description of the inside workings among the laborers, is given below by a young Negro medical student, who became a strike-breaker:

There was no regular way of getting men. I heard on the streets that men were needed and wages were high. Partly on this account and largely for the experience, I determined to go, and appeared next morning at the station to await the stockyards' train. The station was crowded with restless men and women all eager to work. . . . Finally the train came—ten coaches long. Pell-mell the people rushed in—women, girls and men—till the cars were so crowded the conductors could not collect the fares. This was only one of five such trains which went to the yards the day I went there. Along the road, there were many jeering crowds, who kept up a continual harassing noise all the way to the yards. Occasionally there was a stone thrown at us by some overzealous labor unionist who had escaped the eye of the policeman. . . .

Arriving, I found myself in a crowd of men going to Nelson Morris's plant. We were led to the check room and registered by a man who claimed to have secured us. . . . After staying around



for a half hour I was one of those picked out as waiters. We went downstairs in a large barnlike room, with no windows and only a door communicating with the outside world. The floor was wet from the dripping vats above. In the room formerly used for packing sausage, corn beef, etc., the food was now cooked. . . . Dinner time came. Fifty-three of us waiters had large flat trucks loaded with lard-cans full of food, beans, potatoes, meat, peas, tomatoes. This was put into tin plates, while coffee was placed in lard pails, and bread, butter and sugar on the tables. Then in all glorious disorder came rushing in between 700 and 800 hungry men, each choosing his own place at the table and eating what was before him. . . .

Most of the Negroes employed were unskilled and were so indiscriminately gotten that it cannot be said that they were effective workers, or even the better type of strike-breakers. They served a purpose, however, by the greatness of their numbers, of weakening the strikers. Within one month an industry which had used ninety-five per cent white labor now threatened to use eighty-five per cent Negro labor. It was more than unionism could bear. The more thoughtless strikers and their friends used violence, and made it positively dangerous for a black face to appear in "Packingtown." But the thoughtful few saw another side of the subject, and used persuasion and proffers of future friendliness to Negroes. Negro preachers, political leaders and others were asked to urge the strike-breakers to quit work. On August 24, 1904, a telegram was sent to Booker T. Washington by prominent members of the Chicago Federation of Labor to this effect: "Organized labor of Chicago, representing 250,000 men and women of all races, respectfully requests you to address a mass meeting of colored people in this city on the subject, 'Should Negroes Become Strike-breakers.'" The telegram included also expressions concerning the efforts of the unions to overcome race prejudice.

On September 9, the strike ended, the unions surrendered unconditionally, and the men went back to work. The majority of the Negroes had not gained in proficiency, and quit or were discharged. A fair proportion remained. To-day no industry in Chicago employs more Negroes than the packing industries, where in nearly every branch they may find employment.

#### *The Teamsters' Strike.*

The teamsters' strike began April 6 in sympathy for the garment workers of the mail-order house of Montgomery Ward & Co., who had been upon a strike since November. On Friday, April 7, seventy-one teamsters employed by that firm quit work. The next day strike-breakers, among them many Negroes, took their places and delivered goods under police protection. There was a brief but futile effort at settlement; then a grim determination on the part of both employers and teamsters to win. The strike spread to the railway express drivers, department store drivers, coal drivers, parcel and baggage delivery drivers, furniture, lumber and truck drivers, and other teamsters who refused to deliver goods to strike-bound houses, in all about 5,000 men.

Among the first strike-breakers were a large number of Negroes. Negroes drove for such firms as Marshall Field, Carson, Pirie, Scott & Co., J. V. Farwell, Johnson Chair Co., and others who had not before employed Negro teamsters. The coal companies were freshly manned almost entirely with Negroes. This was, as usual, the signal for violence. For one hundred and five days there was a fierce struggle; and for at least forty days it seemed that there was war. Over five hundred cases of violence were known to the police, and at least a score of deaths resulted. During the second month the teamsters weakened considerably, and the end came July 20 when the Teamsters' Joint Council declared the strike off without condition. The coal teamsters, however, did not go back to work, but kept up the strike against the coal companies who were employing Negroes. August 23, however, the coal teamsters decided to call off; but at this writing, August 30, policemen are still guarding Negro drivers of coal wagons.

After the first three weeks of the strike Negroes constituted an ever-decreasing number of strike-breakers. Of the total number of men employed by the Employers' Association, there were 700 white men from Chicago to 200 Negroes; 4,300 white men were imported from St. Louis, Toledo, Buffalo, Cleveland, Minneapolis, Indianapolis, Omaha, Peoria, Rock Island, Moline, Davenport, and other cities.



while about 450 Negroes were brought from St. Louis and 150 from Kansas City. At the end of the strike there were only about two per cent Negro strike-breakers. The cause of this decrease was chiefly the violence which the strike incited. Officers of the Employers' Association assure me that the Negroes were quite as competent as the whites, but that white strike-breakers objected to working with them; and that Negroes were often especially singled out for violent attacks by strikers and strike sympathizers. The race issue was raised by strikers, encouraged by exaggerated reports of some of the daily papers. The populace was in a fever, condemning Negro strike-breakers more than white strike-breakers, and deriding and committing violence upon them, even when they did not approve of the grounds of the strike. Many of the Negroes left their work voluntarily; but the majority remained until they were discharged. Now about eighty Negroes hold places gotten during the strike.

*Winning Place  
Against Odds.*

After this review, one comes to the question: Why do Negroes become strike-breakers? A prominent labor editor of this city writes me in answer to this question, that the cause is "a certain prejudice which exists against them (Negroes) in the minds of white men, no matter how we might try to disguise the feeling, which operates against them in securing employment under normal conditions." Of course it must be borne in mind that Negroes seldom constitute the majority of strike-breakers. The public is in danger of being misled upon this point. In the teamsters' strike the impression was abroad that Negroes were the majority of strike-breakers. No less a personage than a Negro secretary of the teamsters' union wrote me that Negroes constituted ninety per cent of the strike-breakers during the first weeks of the strike, and forty per cent at the time of his writing (July 1). The fact is Negroes never made up as high as ninety per cent of the strike-breakers, and July 1 were only about five per cent. The bulk of Negro workmen never consisted of strike-breakers. Nor are Negroes opposed to unions. Many struck with the unions and remained loyal to them at the stock-

yards. In the teamsters' strike, while there were 800 Negro strike-breakers, the unions held a membership of nearly two thousand Negro teamsters, and one of their number represented the coal drivers at the Philadelphia convention of the Brotherhood of Teamsters in August. There are a half-dozen Negro delegates to the Chicago Federation of Labor, and several Negro local union officers. Yet it still remains that in times of industrial peace the more desirable places are closed against Negroes, either because the employers will not hire them or the men will not work with them.

Negroes become strike-breakers, also, because of the high wages paid during strikes. The union scale, and even higher, is paid. Teamsters receive \$4 and \$5 per day, which is paid every evening. Lodging was often furnished and sometimes board. This has great force with the unemployed and discontented classes.

The relation of Negroes to industrial unrest makes it clear that whatever the Negro is to have in the labor world must be won by him against odds, and held by superior force. Only as the Negro develops into a strong competitor will he be recognized. Many examples of this occur each year. A case at the stockyards is typical. Several years ago a Negro "boner" came from Kansas City where he had followed his trade as a union man. He was not admitted to the union in Chicago. Here "boning" was considered a "white man's" job, and members of the union though outwardly friendly to the Negro, privately advised one another to "knock the Negro" if he aspired to anything except a "Negro's job." But during the strike Negroes got the opportunity to develop proficiency as "boners." Now it is no longer considered "a white man's job," and the Negroes who work at it are being urged to join the union.

The part which Negroes have played as strike-breakers has caused a higher value to be put upon their labor than before. Often an employer did not employ a Negro simply "because he had never had any" or "because he preferred whites," or because at some time in the past he had had some trouble with an individual Negro. Thus the door of opportunity is closed until this employer is forced to



take Negro strike breakers. This was the case in many instances during the last strike, and in most cases the efficiency and courage of the Negroes was surprising. Mr. Reed, of the Employers' Teaming Company, said to me, "The Negroes did noble work. Their courage has seldom been surpassed." The secretary of the F. G. Hartwell Coal Company, for whom Negroes had not before worked, said, "The Negroes have gained considerably by assisting the employers in this strike. They have shown a commendable spirit of pluck and independence." The Peabody Coal Company's secretary expressed himself as "highly pleased" with his Negro teamsters.

On the other hand the part of Negroes in strikes is bringing the unions to deal with less of insincerity than heretofore with the Negroes. They are beginning to realize in fact, what they have asserted in theory, that the cause of labor cannot be limited by color, creed or any other extraneous condition. They have shown the commendable spirit of welcoming the Negroes when they have been able to win their places. To-day, as never before, unionism, which has often meant the crowding out of Negro laborers, is in an increasingly friendly attitude toward black men. This increase will be more and more as the Negroes increase in competency and intelligence.

## In the Day's Work of a Visiting Nurse

Jessie C. Sleet

Visiting Nurse, New York Charity Organization Society

Roughly, in proportion to their respective numbers, for one white in 1900, six Negroes died from diphtheria and croup, two from whooping cough, ten from malarial fever, two from typhoid fever, two from diarrhoeal diseases, between two and three from consumption, two from heart disease, two from pneumonia, and very nearly two from diseases of the nervous systems and of other organs. This is the showing of the twelfth census for the registration area which includes the larger cities of the United States and certain states.

A trained nurse knows the value of observation and on entering the sick room those things stand out which retard the recovery of the patient and endanger the health of the other members of the family. The housing conditions spoken of by Miss Ovington in this number are very apparent causes of ill health; another cause is lack of proper food and clothing. The Negro's income being small, he many times furnishes the food that satisfies the appetite, but contributes little toward the development of the health of the consumer.

\* \* \*

Some days ago I called to see Mrs. A—. She was just recovering from an attack of pneumonia, but little five-year-old Edgar told me that she was out looking for

work. They lived in two small rooms in a rear house in what is considered to be one of the worse blocks in the city. The husband had deserted the mother and the struggle to support herself and child had not been an easy one. Edgar was delicate. His little limbs were so deformed that he could hardly have romped and played with the other children had he been well enough. I found him eating his noonday meal, which consisted of hominy and a piece of dry bread. Presently he looked up and smiling in my face asked:

"Have you had your dinner?"

"No," I answered.

"Would you like a piece of chicken?" he asked.

I shook my head.

"Would like a piece of pie?"

Again I shook my head.

"Not custard pie?" he exclaimed. Then I said, "Edgar you haven't any chicken and you haven't any pie. Why did you ask me to have some?"

"Didn't you ever make believe?" came the reply with a look of disgust. Then he added with a queer little sigh, "I don't like hominy without milk." Quickly the cloud cleared away and then—"Sometimes when my mother goes to work I stay here all alone until she comes. If she's late and it gets dark, I climb into my bed and shut my eyes and go to the country,