

ALL "SISTERS" WHO BEG IN SALOONS ARE FRAUDS

And a Large Percentage of Pretended "Salvation Army" Girls and "Volunteers" Who Enter Barrooms Are Bogus--- How the Graft Is Worked.

If you know much about the inside of barrooms you can skip the first few paragraphs of this tale, for it will be an old story to you. If, however, the temples of the Demon Rum are to you strange territory you will have to be told at the outset just how the fake religious beggar works.

Sundry paragraphs in the week's papers told how a group of baseball men were in the bar of the Hotel Breslin, resting from their labors of deliberation as to next season's games, when in came a pair of gentle nuns. The manager pointed out to them in clear and vigorous terms that the quicker they left the place the better it would be for all concerned. Exit the gentle nuns and explosions of indignation from the baseball men.

The manager got the better of the argument after a while. He said they were fakers, maintaining the same in the face of his guests' expostulations, and the Church and the Law have both backed him up. They were fake nuns, just as he said, and the money of the convivial gentlemen assembled at the bar would never have got nearer the Church than the pocket of the woman who took it in.

Begging for "religious" purposes is a common form of graft everywhere and especially around barrooms. That doesn't mean that some of the solicitors of alms are not genuine. Some are perfectly sincere. The Salvation Army and, to a lesser degree, the Volunteers of America, both send their workers to barrooms and saloons. But in the trail of these genuine religious persons there has arisen a large and flourishing graft.

It has come to be the case that a man can barely begin to enjoy himself and forget the troubles of the day in the seclusion of some select resort, but that the spectre of some fake nun, wearing some kind of queer hat, glass beads, and a "sister" sash, appears at the moment that his pocket is open. He recognizes the impostor, and proceeds to justify himself.

He gives money. He gives it sometimes very liberally. He knows that he shouldn't be doing just what he is doing at the particular moment conscience appears. He has to invent as a chain to square himself and demonstrate the worthy sort of chap he fundamentally is.

The psychology is simple enough. Nobody needs to think twice to grasp how it happens that there is a good deal of money to be made by asking alms in saloons. And it is not a complicated process of reasoning that leads to the next step in the story, that the wicked, seeing the prosperity of the good, meditated a moment, and then decided the graft was too attractive to let slip.

There is no law against wolves wearing the clothing of sheep. If you so desire you may deck yourself out as a nun or a priest or a Salvation Army soldier and go where you like. Naturally, if you get money by reason of your costume you may be arrested for obtaining it under false pretenses, but the point is, somebody has to catch you first. And that is not so easy.

Then there is another thing the grafters do. As was noted before, sometimes the citizens to whom they appeal are not distinguished, at the moment, between one shape of bonnet and another, or one color of ribbon and another. A near-uniform of some sort is enough to bring out a reasonable amount of money, and some of the grafters don't even pretend to belong to any of the big organizations.

"The American Salvation Army," "The Christian Warriors," the "American Volunteers" are all names that would entice the unwary and the middle-headed to give. The Salvation Army had a hard fight over the use of the first of these titles.

One "General" Duffin, aided and abetted by various "Captains" and "Lieutenants" carried on a brisk business of collecting as the "American Salvation Army" until the courts restrained him from using the name. They had uniforms—and that was about all, except audacity.

Another well-known figure in the world of religious graft was one Harold C. Eva, who used to collect money for an alleged home for boys in Harlem, and made a good thing of it until the Association for the Prevention of Mendicancy went after him.

Only this week the Salvation Army has secured the conviction of a man who was soliciting alms in their name in Brooklyn. The Volunteers of America have had some trouble, but have not yet brought suit in any case, for conviction is difficult. They have been more bothered in



Mabel Marinescu in Private Life.

the West than about New York. They have been driven to incorporating in their names several names resembling their own, so as to be able to stop the impostors.

How are people to know the real collector for religious organizations from the fake? Easily. To begin with, the Catholic end of the matter is soon settled—so far as saloons go. No Sister of Charity is ever sent to such places. If a "nun" enters a barroom she is marked out as a fake at once.

Some orders of Sisters of Charity are allowed to ask alms from house to house. They all have cards, signed by the church authorities, and will show them if asked. Without a card they are impostors.

All the real Salvation Army collectors and all the Volunteers of America have cards, too, and they are issued for the month when the request is made. Don't give to any one with a card of an odd date, and don't give to organizations that sound plausible but that are not known.

The Salvation Army has worked hard to keep impostors out, but this is a big world and the game and its methods are well known. The regular women who have standards are all right, and of course there is always the refuse of the card, even in a barroom, when there is any doubt.

It would appear that the "nuns" especially have no religious prejudice. They will give their services as collector as readily to a non-sectarian institution as to the church. The International Sunshine Society has had its share of trouble with them.

Word came to the headquarters of the society that two "Sisters of Charity" were selling Bibles for the benefit of the blind babies. As the society does not get its money by selling Bibles from house to house, or by any form of house-to-house soliciting, some indignation momentarily clouded the sunny atmosphere of the establishment. The police were telephoned to, and they have promised to do what they can.

The same society has had trouble with self-constituted "agents" of various other kinds. A woman not long ago went about selling cards printed with a poem urging people to give to the poor children of the Sunshine homes. As luck would have it she stumbled into the office of the husband of Mrs. Alden, the organizer of the society, and asked for fifteen cents to help the good work. A clerk lost no time in letting Mr. Alden know of his visitor, and that gentleman rushed out to catch the impostor red-handed, but she had seen his name on the inner door and vanished.

Only the other day telegrams were fly-

Mabel Transformed Into a "Sister."

ing between the society's headquarters and the West, where a man was going gaily about taking money for the cause in which the Sunshiners are interested. In fact, like every other widely organized society with many interests, impostors all over the country will victimize it if they can.

The Association for the Prevention of Mendicancy and Charitable Imposition is a long name, but it has the merit of being thoroughly descriptive. It knows a lot about this kind of graft and has been warning people against it for some time. They have made it difficult for fake beggars to work their trade under ordinary circumstances, but it is hard for them to stop the saloon graft.

The man who has reached a maudlin stage of drink continues to be a pretty easy victim. Convictions are hard to secure because the police have to be wary about getting hold of the wrong people, and the three or four men from Headquarters who used to be given this particular task and who had come to know the worst offenders by sight have been taken off the duty. There isn't any fake beggar squad of police any more, so there has been a recent rise in the stock of the non-existent religious organizations.

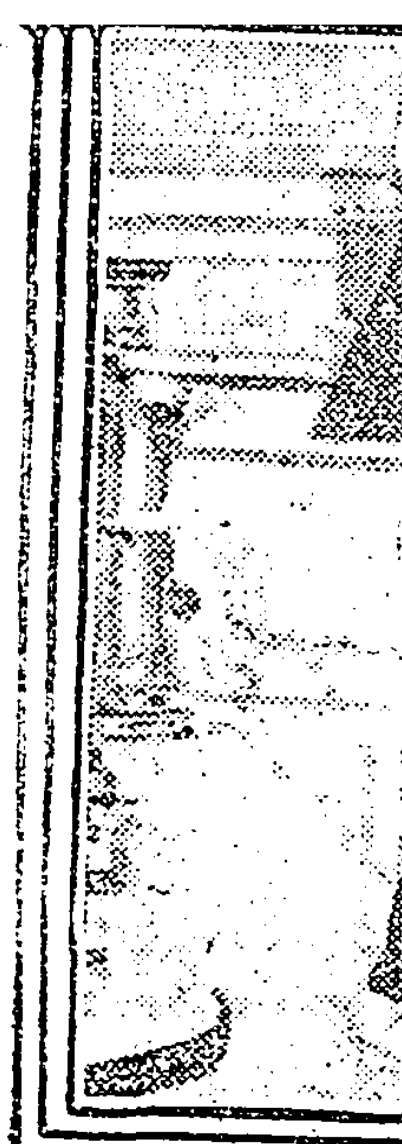
"The women who were ordered out of the Breslin the other day," said James Forbes, the Director of the association, "answer the description of two notorious women who have made a good living and saved money by passing as Carmelite nuns."

"One gives the name of Sister Maria Agnese and the other Sister Maria Adda. Maria Agnese is a Spanish woman, her confederate is Italian. The police know them as the Valentin and the Neapolitan. They are striking looking women and have had a great success in their trade. They must be well off by now."

"When they had been working for some time they were arrested. They put up the plea that they were connected with the diocese of Naples. They had plenty of money to hire legal advice, and this was the suggestion that got them out of not having licenses from the Church authorities here. They kept their money, by the way, in a safe deposit box, and the combination that opened it was 'Madrid.'"

"With the help of several dignitaries of the Catholic Church here we secured a letter from the Archbishop of Naples stating that there were no such women connected with his diocese. We thought that would settle it, but it didn't. The Court said that the evidence of the Archbishop could not be accepted because he was not here to testify in person."

"So they got off, but they have been more wary ever since. Even if they could



The Two "Sisters" Who Were Put Out of the Breslin Bar.

he stopped now, he would still have reason to think that he had done this a good deal for the cause, but he had not money left to give on. The fake beggar from Europe saves money, the American spends it as fast as he gets it.

"There was another fake 'sister' whose conviction was also secured. Here are two pictures of her. In the one she is just a common woman of the tenements, and in the other she is really impressive as a nun. She is a native-born American, came to this country from North Va. Her name is really Mabel Marinescu, however she married a foreigner and he calls her Mabel Marinescu, as if she were a foreigner. She has a dozen aliases."

"She made plenty of money, too, but she lived from hand to mouth, and didn't have the intelligence of the Valentin and the Neapolitan. She made a specialty of working Wall Street men. She used to take with her this poor child, her exhorter."

Mr. Forbes showed a photograph of a miserable little object, clothed in rags and looking scared to death. She had spent some twelve or thirteen years in the midst of graft and faking and she seemed stupefied thereby.

The Director of the society pulled out several more photographs.

"This," he said, "was a red-headed Irish girl who posed as a Sister and collected a lot of money from small shopkeepers, chiefly among the east side Italians. And this is 'Sister Celeste'—rogues' gallery picture. She was arrested a number of times."

"In fact, it is a great graft, or it was



The Representative of the "Silver Cross Mission," Which Does Not Exist.

until the public began to be educated to it. A good many of these alleged sisters had really been in religion in Europe and had been dismissed for good reason."

task, you know. It rescues scores of people who are mighty little good at earning money. It does its best to be careful—understand, I'm not criticizing the Army—but it's hard for them.

"They try to use the worst down-and-out cases in collecting paper and stuff from houses. They try to use for money-getting people that they know better, and they keep their cards right up to date so as to check them up and not let discredited people use old cards to get money."

"But every once in a while there is a backslider. He is found out and dismissed from the Army, and if he has enough energy he may start in a collecting business for himself."

"Several of the fakers we have exposed were discredited people who had been put out of the Army. Some man with more or less ability to organize gets hold of men and women like himself, but less able, and starts in a regular system of collecting."

"The organization is not very secure because the collectors are going to cheat the boss, and the boss is going to cheat them at every possible chance, but it goes along some way, with men dropping out and changing from time to time, until the police step in and stop things. It can go on for quite a while before sufficient evidence is got against them, and in the meantime they have made a good deal of money."

"I suppose," remarked the interviewer, "that a dollar or two a day is a good deal of money for them."

"Oh dear no," corrected Mr. Forbes.



and 3 o'clock in the morning, and they can tell a victim a block way.

"If the thing is organized and directed by a central authority, as it was in the case of the grafters employed by Harold C. Eva, it is a really profitable business. He knows just how to use the men and women and they make more than they ever did before while he gets 60 per cent. of their earnings if they don't hold some of it back."

"Some of these grafters work in the name of a real organization, but some just take a name and a 'charitable' object, and let it go at that. Occasionally they actually do have some sort of establishment they are keeping up, so as to make their case better if they are arrested."

"These, of course, are the more intelligent ones who want to make a steady occupation of fake charity and they are willing to spend a small per cent. of what they take in in order to make the thing's permanency, if possible. But the majority are too degenerate to think anything out so far as that and are content to operate on a pure fake till they get caught, knowing how good a chance of escape there is."

"Sometimes we run up against a really pathetic case. Take this child for instance. She was arrested with a friend for collecting for a 'Silver Cross Mission' that didn't exist. She wore a silver cross and a star on which she had had engraved a lot of things about helping the poor."

"She didn't seem to be depraved, fundamentally, by any means. She and her chum had been factory drudges and earned three or four dollars a week with no prospect of ever getting any more. It wasn't a very cheerful existence, poor child."

"Well, somebody told her of the fake beggar scheme and she and her chum decided to try it. They were Irish girls with names something like Kitty Sullivan and Nellie O'Donohue, but they thought they'd change them, so they christened themselves Vivian Montague and Lillian Cholmondely. They got the names out of books they had read."

"Their idea was, apparently, to collect money by begging for the 'Silver Cross Mission' and then go on the stage. They explained that they had taken these lovely names for stage purposes and I believe that was really the way their poor childish heads had been working."

"It would have been cruel to send them to prison and they were paroled. I don't know what has become of them, but I suppose they went back to the old druggery. At any rate the police never heard of them again. I will let you use Vivian's picture," added Mr. Forbes, laughing, "because it doesn't do her justice and it all occurred some years ago—so it won't do her any harm, if she is straight now."

"Imagine what four or five dollars a day, apiece, meant to those girls. More money in a day than they could earn in a week and not nearly such hard work. When the fake beggars have tasted blood, as it were, it is very hard to turn them straight again."

"It is not only women who run the religious graft, though they do best at it. We had a case of a man who posed as a clergyman the other day and collected a lot of money. He did not operate, of course, in saloons, but he did about as well as the barroom grafters."

The religious graft does not seem for that matter to be restricted in any way—it is a free-for-all race. Americans and aliens alike prosper in it, except that the aliens are more thrifty. Men make fewer pickings, but they are bigger when they do come.

A rich man in this city wrote his check for \$5,000 two years in succession in favor of a "clergyman" who was carrying on a school in the South. He might be writing checks to this day in the same cause, if he had not happened to tell a friend who was going South of the worthy work of his clerical acquaintance. The friend stopped off to admire and found no sign or rumor of a school within miles.

About this time some one will say that all these tales discourage a body from ever giving way to a generous impulse. But perhaps the truer psychology is that people are anxious to attain the thrill that goes with a sense of having helped a fellowman at so slight a cost.

In and out of barrooms we like to square our consciences as easily as possible. The grafter, being a person gifted with some psychological insight, perceives this quality in human nature and works on it. The grafter is a person who is pre-eminently lazy—but so is the indiscriminate giver in a world so full of real necessity as this we live in.