

MOTHER O' KEEFFE'S LAUNDRY BUSINESS

Mended Humanity the By-Product—A Fact Story.

Henry Magill in Everybody's.

Here's a little task to toy with: Take the most hapless and hopeless part of the population of a great city—women who have been in prison; succor them; restore them to self-support and self-respect; it can't be done—but do it; do it for thousands of women; do it for fifty years; and never, all that time, never once solicit a contribution; never beg, never can advertise; accept no charity for your charity—none at all; make it pay its own way; and in the end, out of your charity and for it and to perpetuate it, have land and houses and equipment worth three hundred thousand dollars.

To approach this task, to have the yearning heart and the healing soul for it, one must be a man of God. To accomplish it, financially, one must be marvelous business man. Men?

It happens—woman. A marvelous business woman and—well, how strange it is that the words "woman of God" should sound so strange? Yes, that smaller title shall we give to Mother O'Keeffe?

She was born in the south of Ireland, in the east of the south of Ireland, on the left bank of the Shannon—Ellen O'Keeffe, carrying still in her voice today the lilt of Limerick. She came to the city of New York in poverty and powerlessness.

Two hundred women does she shelter every night, and set to work every day in her places of business, her homes. And a thousand women and more did she establish last year in the employ of others to labor quietly and securely on their way back to the re-making of their lives.

A Business Not a Charity

It is wonderful enough that out of broken women Mother O'Keeffe has made whole women. But more wonderful still—much more wonderful—is this: that out of human material distrusted and rejected by business, condemned by business, to go from jail to unemployment, to starvation, to crime, to jail—out of such material Mother O'Keeffe has made a business concern which, just as a business concern, stands and walks by itself.

Scientific selection of employees? Mother O'Keeffe's places of business lie open, night and day, to every woman, energetic or sullen, God-seeking or hell-bent, steady or restive, who climbs their steps.

More than half a century ago it was a nurse that young Ellen O'Keeffe would be. For that she went to the island that lies in the East river between Manhattan and Long Island. There Ellen O'Keeffe saw hospital wards, but also prison cells. It was, and is, a place for "correction."

And there Ellen O'Keeffe saw an old story. She met a girl. She met her often. She had been sent to the island, this girl, to be "corrected" for her first time. And she was soft-hearted and fair-spoken and fearful and sorry, almost always; and Ellen O'Keeffe counseled her that she might work at honest work; and her sentence was served; and she took the ferry and went back to the City and would sin no more.

But the City—what an old, old story!—turned her away from all honest work, distrusting her, and would not let her work at all except at sin and so, shortly, sent her back to the island to be "corrected" again. And she cursed Ellen O'Keeffe to her face for a fool and a liar.

And so did Ellen O'Keeffe write the old sequel to this story? Did she go and make a job for herself as secretary and agent for a society for finding employment for female ex-prisoners? And get a Board of Lady Managers with luncheons and clothes?

She might have done so, very properly; but she did not. Instead, she saved two hundred dollars of her own. She gave to her prospective fling in God's business the same thrift she would have been obliged to give to a prospective fling in other kind of business.

Having saved her money, Ellen O'Keeffe was ready to save that girl.

She went and rented a five-room flat in a tenement-building on East Twenty-sixth street, close by the dock to which the ferry comes plying from the island to Manhattan. And she bought a few cots and blankets and chairs and a table. Here was a refuge. But Ellen O'Keeffe didn't want a refuge—a retreat from the world. She wanted—for that girl—a return to the world. So she bought, also;

soap, starch, bluing, wash-tubs, wash-boards.

There she had her first place of business. Now for her first order! Thrift! With fifty dollars of her savings in her hand-bag Ellen O'Keeffe walked over to the old Fifth Avenue Hotel and asked that they let her take the wash, and laid down fifty dollars that the wash would come back. And the Old Fifth Avenue did a good day's work for New York by saying "Yes."

With a place of business and an order, Ellen O'Keeffe, laundry proprietor, went to the island and told the girls who were about to be released that there was honest work for them in the City. Did they come?

"It is easier to get a man on his feet and make something out of him," says Mother O'Keeffe, "than to get a woman even to promise to start on the right road." Therefore the great ones of the earth and even of the church said to young Ellen O'Keeffe in those days: "We must be more attentive to men." That's what their talk came to. Mother O'Keeffe's conclusion is different. "Therefore," says she, "we must be more patient with women."

But Ellen O'Keeffe, beside patience had driving business power. Her plan was workable. The women came; and they have kept on coming for fifty years.

The laundry business in the five-room flat in the tenement building grew. It grew to fill the whole building. On behalf of the women who were not strong enough to do washing, Ellen O'Keeffe took in mending. And, for their food, she asked her customers, who were hotel men to send her cut bread and other discarded but decent victuals in the hampers in which she returned their linen. She asked them to do this, but she paid them for it. It was business, all of it.

Accordingly, Ellen O'Keeffe began to have standing. She was no mere charity lady. She was business, solvent and growing. And so she was able to go on to what is really the bigger part of her work.

When Ellen O'Keeffe said to one of her customers, "This woman is vigorous and industrious—I know it, and she would make a good dishwasher," the woman started washing dishes. And when Ellen O'Keeffe said: "This woman has her faults; but stealing is not among them; and she can be trusted to be a chambermaid," the woman started making beds. It was a big employment agency that Ellen O'Keeffe was now, besides an employer. On her word thousands of women have passed back into working life who without some such bridge would have sunk and drowned.

So thirty years went by, during which Ellen O'Keeffe became Mother O'Keeffe—to multitudes.

And there came to be two big houses for sale a mile or so north of Mother O'Keeffe's laundry. They were massive, luxurious. They had been built by Heinrich Steinway, manufacturer of pianos for his sons. They were called the Steinway Mansions. The neighborhood in which they were situated had ceased to be "awfully nice" and had become frightfully mixed. The Steinway Mansions on Fifty-second street were for sale. But at a stiff price. And Mother O'Keeffe, manager of a business for female ex-prisoners, bought them and paid cash.

Afterward she bought another big house still farther north, on East Seventy-ninth street, in a neighborhood extremely expensive and extremely profitable. There is no cowardice in Mother O'Keeffe's concern. And she was a regularly incorporated corporation, though two places of business, open day and night to the most hopeless part of the population, recruiting its working-force from what is thought to be the most inefficient element in society, paying regular wages and accumulating surpluses. A quite well-mannered corporation!

Mother Mary Zita

Naturally the lips of a woman who has accomplished such things are firm. They are even hard. Mother O'Keeffe has not managed her sort of business without making decisions. But she decides a thing once, not twice. Her lips show it. And her quick step shows the woman of aggressive action and the stoop of her shoulders the laborious administrator. Her voice, too, is telling—quiet and low and not wasted. She knows this world. But the smile-lines about the good gray eyes show the woman of sisterly love, and the forehead, smooth and clear as heaven, shows the woman who thinks and rests in God.

She wears God's habit now—dark-brown—the habit of a new organization in the church to which she belongs.

She began to see that the property which she had accumulated and which she had dedicated to a purpose beyond her death. The young Irish girl who came to America in poverty and powerlessness and who would be a nurse, has taken her place in the line of historic, heroic women.

Has Married About 300 Pairs

Southern Pines Dispatch, 3rd. "Squire J. Will Wicker of Lee county is working toward his 20 years as justice of the peace. He started dispensing justice in Moore county, and kept right on with the work when he was set off with Lee when the new county was created. In his day he has married upwards of 300 young pairs, but probably no more romantic wedding came his way than a few days ago when a couple insisted on being married in the public road. The 'squire looked at the license blanks when he filled them in, and when it came to note in the blank place of the ceremony, he thought a minute and then instead of church or residence wrote in "the big road" and let it go at that.

Years ago when "Squire Walker was making his second campaign, he was called on for a speech. Speech-making was not in his line, so he told the audience that all he had to say was that if they wanted to elect him, he would serve, and if they did not that was their affair. They elected him, and have been keeping it up ever since.

NEXT SUNDAY IS MOTHER'S DAY.

Next Sunday will be observed all over America as Mother's Day. The following selections have been sent to The Journal as appropriate to the day:

To My Son.

Do you know that your soul is of mine such a part
That you seem to be fibre and core of my heart?
No other can pine me as you, dear, can do;
No other can please me, or praise me, like you.
Remember the world will be quick with its blame.
If shadow or stain ever darkens your name:
"Like mother, like son," is a saying so true.
The world will judge largely of "mother" by you.
Be yours then the task, if task it shall be.
To force this old world to do homage to me:
Rest assured it will say, when its verdict you've won,
She reaped as she sowed, behold, this is her son!"
—Veni McDonald, in The Chautauquan.

Mother.

Pale, withered hands, that nearly four-score years
Had wrought for others, soothed the hurt of tears,
Rocked children's cradles, eased the fever's smart,
Dropped balm of love in many an aching heart:
Now, stress-folded like wan rose-leaves pressed
Above the snow and silence of her breast,
In mute appeal they told of labours done,
And well-earned rest that came at set of sun.

From the worn brow the lines of care had swept
As if an angel's kiss, the while she slept.
Had smoothed the cobweb wrinkles away,
And given back the peace of childhood's day,
And on the lips the faint smile almost said,
"None knows life's secret but the happy dead."
So gazing where she lay, we knew that pain
And parting could not cleave her soul again.

And we were sure that they who saw her last
In that dim vista which we call the past:
Who never knew her old and laid aside,
Remembering best the maiden and the bride,
Had sprung to greet her with the olden speech,
The dear, sweet names no later lore can teach.
And "Welcome home" they cried, and grasped her hands,
So dwells our mother in the best of hands.
—British Weekly.

My Mother—A Prayer.

Tom Dillon in Seattle Post.
For the body you gave me, the bone and the sinew, the heart and the brain that are yours, my mother, I thank you. I thank you for the light in my eyes, the blood in my veins, for my speech, for my life, for my being. All that I am is from you who bore me.
For all the love that you gave me, unmeasured from the beginning, my mother, I thank you. I thank you for the hand that led me, the voice that directed me, the breast that nestled me, the lap that rested me. All that I am is by you, who nursed me.

For your smile in the morning and your kiss at night, my mother, I thank you. I thank you for the tears you shed over me, the songs that you sung to me, the prayers that you said for me, for your vigils and ministrings. All that I am is by you, who reared me.

For the faith you had in me, the hope you had for me, for your trust and your pride, my mother, I thank you. I thank you for your praise and your chiding, for the justice you bred into me and the honor you made mine. All that I am you taught me.

For the sore travail that I caused you, for the visions and despairs, my mother, forgive me. Forgive me the peril I brought you to, the sobs and the moans I wrung from you, and for the strength I took from you, mother, forgive me.

For the fears I gave you, for the alarms and the dreads, my mother, forgive me. Forgive me the joys I deprived you, the toils I made for you, for the hours, the days, and the years I claimed from you, mother, forgive me.

For the times that I hurt you, the times I had no smile for you, the caresses I did not give you, my mother, forgive me. Forgive me for my angers and revolts, for my deceits and evasions, for all the pangs and sorrows I brought to you, mother, forgive me.

For your lessons I did not learn, for your wishes I did not heed, for the counsels I did not obey, my mother, forgive me. Forgive me my pride in my youth and my glory in my strength that forgot the holiness of your years and the veneration of your weakness, for my neglect, for my selfishness, for all the great debts of your love that I have not paid, mother, sweet mother, forgive me.

And may the peace and the joy that passeth all understanding be yours, my mother, forever and ever. Amen.

Health Promotes Happiness.

Without health, genuine joy is impossible; without good digestion and regular bowel movement you cannot have health. Why neglect keeping bowels open and risk being sick and ailing? Take one small Dr. King's New Life Pills at night, in the morning you will have a full, free bowel movement and feel much better. Helps your appetite and digestion. Try one tonight.

Twentieth of May Celebration and Trade Carnival, May 18, 19, 20 and 21, 1915, Charlotte, N. C.

Come Help Us Celebrate!

The City of Charlotte and Mecklenburg county will hold this year a great celebration commemorating the Anniversary of the Signing of the Mecklenburg Declaration of Independence, beginning on the evening of Monday, May 17th, and closing on the afternoon of Friday, May 21st---four nights and four days of festivities.

We cannot reach every patriotic citizen personally and we use your own home paper to invite you, your family and your friends, to come and be with us on this big occasion. For your entertainment we will have some of the country's greatest speakers and entertainers to be with us on this occasion.

We will have numerous big free shows, gorgeous parades, blazing with electricity, fireworks displays that will be remembered by our children long after we have passed these celebrations down to them, balloon ascensions, baseball games, bands of music, and many other entertaining features. Every railroad entering Charlotte has posted low round trip rates within a radius of 200 miles.

In addition to the entertainment features the big stores of Charlotte are sending buyers to the markets now and will have the greatest values ever known to offer you. Standard merchandise, millinery and ready-to-wear clothing, furniture, and all classes of goods to supply your needs.

You can combine business with pleasure and make this a profitable pleasure trip, but, whether you buy a dollar's worth of merchandise in Charlotte that week we want you to come, bring your family and your friends.

Charlotte will welcome you and guarantee you the biggest time of your lives.

Come and see the biggest city in the State and see how we do things. If you can't be with us all four days be here one or two days anyway.

We are looking for YOU.

PUBLICITY COMMITTEE.

Fresh Stuff.

- ALL OF THE NICEST QUALITY.
- FRESH SAUSAGE,
- COOKED BRAINS,
- DRIED BEEF,
- RHEUBARR,
- AND ANY OTHER GOOD THINGS.

M. Waller