

NELLIE BLY BUYS A BABY.

AN INNOCENT CHILD SOLD INTO SLAVERY FOR TEN DOLLARS.

THE APPALLING TRAFFIC IN HUMAN FLESH IN NEW YORK.

Heartless Mothers and Grasping Midwives Who Barter Helpless Children for Money—Shocking Indifference of the Slave-Dealers as to What Becomes of the Little Ones—No Questions Asked—A Visit to the Midwife Who Sold the Bogus Hamilton Baby—Startling Facts Which Will Appeal to Every Loving Mother in the Land.

I bought a baby last week, to learn how baby slaves are bought and sold in the city of New York. Think of it! An immortal soul bartered for \$10! Fathers—mothers—ministers—missionaries, I bought an immortal soul last week for \$10!

We had a war not many years ago—a long and bitter struggle, which cost many millions of lives and many millions of dollars, and it was supposed that slavery had ended when the armies disbanded.

But it did not stop slavery. Slavery exists to-day in New York in a more repulsive form than it ever existed in the South. White slaves, baby slaves—young, innocent, helpless baby slaves—bought and sold every day in the week—bargained for before they are born—sold by their parents! The negro slaves had a John Brown to start their march to freedom. Who will start it for the baby slaves of New York?

For several days before I bought a baby I advertised in a number of newspapers for a baby to adopt. I received nothing. Why? Because people who adopt babies for good purposes and in a legitimate way do not expect to buy them. Those people who have babies in the market expect to sell them, and they will not give them away.



THE BABY.

I went first to see Mrs. Dr. Dimire, as her sign reads. She lives in a comfortable house in West Forty-eighth street. A neatly dressed maid ushered me into a very homelike and artistic parlor. The floor was softly carpeted. The windows were hung with real lace curtains, and there was some valuable bric-a-brac about and handsome jardiniere and pictures. Large, rolling glass doors shut off a small room in the rear. When the door opened to admit Mme. Dimire two sky terriers tumbled over each other in their rush to get in first. Mme. Dimire is a large, fleshy woman, with a double chin and dark eyes. She wore a loose wrapper of some thin material that was as white as the spotless cat which lay snuggled up in the window.

"Are you Dr. Dimire?" I asked.

"Yes," she replied, motioning me to be seated.

"Did you advertise a baby for sale?"

"Yes," she replied, again, smiling still broader. "Do you want a baby?"

"Yes. Have you the baby still?"

"Well, you are the eighth person that has called for that baby to-day," she replied complacently, taking her arms across her ample bosom.

"It has gone now to the doctor's with a lady who wanted a baby. She wanted a boy,

with the proviso that if I did not like the baby I would come back to Mme. Dimire's, where she would wait for my report.

SUSPICIOUS OF DANGER.

"Now, before I give you this," said the madame, indicating a note, which was to be my key to the baby slave's presence. "I want you to receive my word of honor that you are not a lady detective."

"Why?" I exclaimed, with an injured air.

"What a dreadful idea! How can you imagine such a thing for a moment?"

"I must protect myself," she said apologetically. "If you had come alone and then published what I have said, I could swear that you lied; but as you have a witness, indicating my elderly companion. I could not do it; so I want your word before I trust you with my nurse's address."

"I don't see how you can imagine such a thing," I said calmly. "I am just as anxious as you are for secrecy."

"You evade my question," she said suspiciously.

"I am not a detective," I said positively. This satisfied the woman, and she gave me the sheet of paper on which was written the nurse's name and address, with this below it:

"Please show the little girl and tell what that lady has decided."

In a tenement-house in East Fifty-second street I found the nurse. She lives in three rooms on the second floor.

"Don't ask for her in the halls or let any one know what you go to see her about," cautioned Mme. Dimire.

Still, I did ask one woman I met in the hallway. When I was leaving she came into the same flat, so I suppose she was a member of the nurse's family. The flat was small and dirty. I asked for the nurse by name. A woman, with ample shape, greasy dress and a great space between the eyes, who met me at the door, claimed the name as hers. She was very gruff and suspicious, and when I told her I had come to see the baby she never moved a muscle, and wanted to know what my name. Then I gave her the note madame had given me.

OUT IN THE RAIN.

"I just got in with the baby," she said, snarply. "I've had it out most all day with a common sort of a woman who made believe she wanted her doctor to tell if it would be fair or dark. It caught a cold, I guess, and I have just done *griva* if some oil."

She took us into the tiny front room of the flat, but before we sat down she invited us to return to the kitchen. Two small, dirty girls, who in novise resembled each other, followed her about.

"I guess you can see her here better than in the front room," she said.

In one dark corner was a small cook stove. Near it was a window. Almost touching the stove was a rocking-chair. On a pillow in that chair and covered with a shawl was the baby slave. The nurse pulled down the shawl and I leaned over to look at the tiny mite, the little slave, who was but two days' old, and had been handled and examined by many with a view to buying it. My heart sobbed for that poor slave. A two-days' old baby, out on a rainy day for many hours!

But it stretches itself. Its little face is awfully red and it has such dark hair and such heavy eyebrows and such a straight nose, which the nurse tells me is a wonderful thing for a two-days' old babe. But its tiny hands are whiter than the pillow it rests on. It works its little fingers feebly, almost as if it wanted to put them in its little mouth. It moves again and a strange cry comes from its tiny throat.

"She caught a cold to-day," the nurse explained in answer to my startled question. "She cried all the afternoon. I made a long trip and I guess she was cold. That's what makes her hoarse now. I gave her a big dose of oil and I think she will be all right to-morrow. Do you want me to undress her?"

OPEN TO INSPECTION.

"Oh, no; please don't. What would you do that for?" I said, all in a breath.

"Most everybody that buys a baby makes me undress it a dozen times before they're sure it's all right. This is a lovely girl though, big for its age," she said as she lifted it out of the chair. The poor little slave twisted up its tiny face, then it opened its tiny dark eyes and blinked just as if it wanted to ask me some questions.

Dr. O'Reilly, of West Forty-ninth street, was very sharp. He is a tall man, with smooth face, stubby gray hair and a stutler. He occupies an entire house, as does Mme. Dimire, and, like her, it is always filled with high-priced patients. "This is the hi-hi-hi-high est priced place in New York," he said proudly, as he looked at me with an impudent, suspicious look. "I cha-cha-charge \$100 entrance fee, and everything else accordingly. This is the only place, the only place where aristocratic children can be found. W-w-when I take a patient in, her offspring is signed over to me to do as I like with it."

"You ask no questions of those who take the babies?" I asked.

"N-n-never," he answered giving me an evil look. "I don't want to know who or what they are or what becomes of the baby. Th-that's nothing to me."

The other exception was a woman on the east side who said she had no babies, and never had. She claims that she always makes the mother take her child away with her and does her utmost to persuade all the women not to part with their children. Her house, she says, is always open to any officers of the law who may wish to inspect it. As she carries on a legitimate business she has nothing to conceal, so she says.

Mrs. Schroeder lives in East Fifty-eighth street. She runs a large establishment and always has babies for sale. She is very cunning. Nobody has ever learned who her nurse is. As soon as a baby is born in her house it is wrapped in a blanket and taken to the nurse's. Then she advertises "babies adopted," which means she both buys and sells. She buys the baby from the mother, according to an agreement made on entering her house, for some sum not exceeding one dollar! She sells for what she can get.

PRICE-LIST OF BABIES.

"I have no baby here now," she said to me. This is her regular price. "If you set an hour for coming back I will get a baby for you. How much? Oh, now, I don't dare sell babies; but of course you will expect to pay me for my trouble. Say \$15. Not Well, then, \$10. You can't expect much of a baby, nor one of good, respectable parents for \$10!"

I did not return. If she would not send me to her nurse's I had no interest in returning. There had been a baby born in her house the day I was there.

Mrs. White, in East Forty-ninth street, buys and sells babies. She has a fine private house, and claims acquaintance with a number of society men and women. She sells a baby for what she can get, but she expects to get a good price.

"I have babies every day," she told me. "A lady from Brooklyn secured one here this morning. If you wait an hour or so I will have one for you."

"A boy or girl?" I asked sarcastically.

"Oh, now, you wouldn't expect me to tell that," she laughed. "If you don't want to wait give me a deposit and I will keep it for you."

"It is quite too new for me. I want to see the baby before I buy it," I said, and I went elsewhere.

"You can never get a baby from more desirable people than this will be," she said, at the door. "The girl belongs to wealthy people. Her mother brought her here, and when she recovers she will go back home and marry a man. Her father doesn't know anything about it. He thinks she is visiting friends. It's an easy thing to do, and is done every day in New York."

Mrs. Eppinger lives in East Eighteenth street. She is a short woman with a shrewd face, and wears a nurse's cap and apron. Mrs. Eppinger furnished two of the Hamilton babies, both of which died.

A FINE GRADE OF BABIES.

"You can get babies of good parents from Mrs. Dimire and myself, but no place else," she said, boastfully.

"How much do you charge for babies?" I asked boldly.

"I don't sell them, but I always get something for my trouble. The lady who bought the baby I have at my nurse's now gave me \$20 for it. She put the money in my hand. I thought it was a silver dollar, but it was a twenty-dollar gold piece."

"Don't you keep the babies here?"

"Well, now, I can't set a price. I do not sell babies," she said.

She brought the baby into the room. She had been feeding it, and the milk seemed to have such a peculiar tinge that it suggested ideas of drugs and such things. It is well known that babies are often drugged and live but a few days after leaving these slave-dealers' hands. Mrs. Eppinger sold Mrs. Hamilton two babies. They both died. Mrs. Koehler sold Mrs. Hamilton one baby. It died. None of these slave-dealers, with the exception of the one who did the business, knew what woman sold baby Beatrice who lived.

"Will you give your word that the baby is healthy and perfect in every respect?" I asked the slave-dealer.

"Yes, it is a beautiful baby. Now, if you will pay me, we will go up to see the mother. She has never seen the baby yet."

I gave her \$10. She looked at the money, then, holding the baby in one hand, she held out the other, saying:

"Please give me more. That is a very little price for such a baby. Won't you pay me more?"

"Not another cent now," I replied. "If the baby turns out well I will send you a present."

I send her a copy of the *SUNDAY WORLD* containing this article, with my compliments.

A DUMMY-MOTHER.

On the third story, in a front room, lay a fair young woman. She had been talking to a friend who was visiting her.

"Here is the baby," the slave-dealer said. "This is the young lady who wants it."

I knew the dummy-mother trick, so I asked the pretended mother what hour the baby was born. She turned to the slave-dealer for answer. She was handed the baby. She nudged the shawl. The little slave, which I had just paid for, opened its tiny blue eyes, as if striving to see for the first and last time—its mother. It rolled its little head feebly; it worked its tiny hands. I felt my throat fill and Hood's cry enter my heart. "O God! that human flesh should be so cheap!"

"It's little, isn't it?" the woman remarked indifferently as she handed the slave back to the dealer, without one kiss, without one glance, without one prayer. If she was its mother her own baby was going from her forever. Where? She did not know. With whom? She did not ask. For what purpose? She did not care.

I took the badly written paper Mrs. Koehler handed me. This is what it said:

"In consideration of the sum of one dollar the party of the second part surrenders to the party of the first part her child, and it is agreed that the party of the first part may dispose of the said child in any manner."

The mother sold it for \$1. I bought it for \$10 from the slave-dealer. This on the 2d of October, in the year of our Lord 1889.

The inhuman, barbarous transaction made me heart sick. I wanted to get away from the slave-dealer and her patients. Tenderly my companion wrapped the blue-eyed, day-old babe in a soft, warm shawl and we left the house as the slave-dealer called after me.

"Don't forget to send me more money for that baby. It's worth it!"

NELLIE BLY.

sign reads: "She lives in a comfortable house in West Forty-eighth street. A neatly dressed maid ushered me into a very comfortable and artistic parlor. The floor was softly carpeted, the windows were hung with real lace curtains, and there were some valuable bric-a-brac about and handsome jardinières and pictures. Large, rolling glass doors shut off a small room in the rear. When the door opened to admit Mme. Dimire two Skye terriers tumbled over each other in their rush to get in first. Mme. Dimire is a large, fleshy woman, with a double chin and dark eyes. She wore a loose wrapper of some thin material that was as white as the spotless cat which lay snuggled up in the window.

"Are you Dr. Dimire?" I asked.
"Yes," she replied, motioning me to be seated.

"Did you advertise a baby for sale?"
"Yes," she replied again, smiling still broader. "Do you want a baby?"

"Yes. Have you the baby still?"
"Well, you are the eighth person that has called for that baby to-day," she replied complacently, folding her arms across her ample breasts. "It has gone now to the doctor's with a lady who wanted a baby. She wanted a boy, though, and a fair one. She said her doctor could tell how babies will turn out, so she has taken the nurse and the baby to the doctor to see if it will be fair. I am expecting her every moment now with an answer, but there is another woman upstairs who is very anxious for it. She wanted a boy, but this girl baby is so beautiful that she will take it if the other woman does not. How old do you want the baby to be?"

"Quite young," I said slowly, for I had not thought much about age. I expected, however, they would, at least, be several weeks old.

"Well, this baby was born at 7 o'clock Saturday morning. That is old enough if you are going to pass it off as your own. Are you married?" she asked suddenly.

"Is it necessary for me to tell about myself in order to buy a baby? I thought not," I answered evasively.

NOT INQUIRITIVE.

"I don't want to know anything about you. I never remember ladies I have business with," she said, with a laugh. "When I am paid and a child is taken out of here that is as far as I am concerned. You look so young that I could not believe you wanted the baby for yourself."

"I supposed you never asked where the baby was going or what use was to be made of it?" I said stiffly.

"I don't," she answered quickly. "I never tell who its parents are; I never know who takes it. The moment it is born I send it to my nurse, who does not live here. There it remains until somebody takes it. The children born here are all of aristocratic parentage. I never take common people in. Just now I sent a woman to my nurse's for care, because she did not belong to the class that patronizes me. What did you expect to pay for a baby?"

"I did not know, as I never bought one," I replied hesitatingly. "How much do you charge for one?"

"I don't sell babies," she replied, "but people are expected to pay me something. How much are you willing to give?"

"Ten dollars!" I said, remembering the price paid for the Robert Ray Hamilton baby.

"Oh, my, no!" she said scornfully. "I never get less than \$25. The woman who has the baby this afternoon said she would give me \$50 if she took it; if she does not take it will you give \$25? Hurry, for there is a woman waiting now who is anxious to take it."

"If it suits me, I will give you \$25 for it," I replied.

Mme. Dimire then said that she would see the woman who was waiting for the baby and, if possible, persuade her to buy the one that was expected to arrive at the house inside of forty-eight hours. If the woman consented she would then give me the address of her nurse and I could go to see the baby. The woman consented.

many hours.
But it stretched itself. Its little face is awfully red and it has such dark hair and such heavy eyebrows and such a straight nose, which the nurse tells me is a wonderful thing for a two-days-old babe. But its tiny hands are whiter than the pillow it rests on. It works its little fingers feebly, almost as if it wanted to put them in its little mouth. It moves again and a strange wail comes from its tiny throat.

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"Most everybody that buys a baby makes me undress it a dozen times before they're sure it's all right." This is a lovely girl though, big for its age," she said as she lifted it out of the chair. The poor little slave twisted up its tiny face, then it opened its tiny dark eyes and blinked just as if it wanted to ask me to buy it. I could not stand it. I turned my back and asked her to put it down.

Hurrying from the house, I returned to Mme. Dimire's. I left my companion in the coupe this time, for I only intended to make my report.

"Madame, the woman took the baby to her doctor's and then sent the nurse home, saying she would come over to see you. The baby has a dreadful cold and even if the woman does not take it I would be afraid to after it was so exposed. I am dreadfully afraid of death and I don't want to buy a baby that is going to die."

"That woman has treated me badly," she replied sternly. "This is the second time I have fussed with her. If she doesn't take this one she will have to go somewhere else the next time."

"I would rather wait and take my chances on the next you have for sale," I said pleasantly.

"I cannot keep a baby for you unless you give me a deposit," she said cunningly. "The reason I asked you so many questions" going back to our former interview, "was because you looked too young to be married and wanting a baby. You had a lady with you who looked very smart. She wouldn't say a word, so she could say she wasn't guilty if anything happened. I am not responsible if a woman gets a baby from me and then pretends to her husband it is her own. I nearly got in trouble, and may yet, by giving a baby to a woman who came here accompanied by another woman just as you did to-day. I was the one who furnished the Hamilton baby!"

"Robert Ray Hamilton's baby?" I exclaimed in surprise.

SHE SOLD THE HAMILTON BABY.

"Yes, the very same. Mrs. Hamilton came here with Mrs. Swinton for a baby. Mrs. Hamilton looked as if she was in good circumstances; she was dressed expensively and Mrs. Swinton looked respectable enough, though awfully cunning. I didn't like to give a baby, when there was a witness, just as I felt to-day in your case, so I said to Mrs. Hamilton, 'Does your husband know that you are going to adopt a baby?' She laughed and said, 'Oh, yes, he knows I am going to get one,' and Mrs. Swinton said, 'You don't need to be afraid to give us the baby, for my son is her husband!'"

Mme. Dimire asked a flood of questions about my domestic affairs. She wanted to give me advice about the way to deceive husbands, as she said she understood such things better than I could; she had had so much more experience. My replies showed my ignorance in many respects, and though she laughed at it, she was completely disarmed by my feigned frankness.

Afterwards visited a number of places, always with the same result. There were babies to be had for the money. Still, I must make two ex-

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"Don't you keep the babies here?"
"Indeed I don't. The moment they are born I send for my nurse and she takes them away and keeps them until they are taken by somebody."

"You never ask any questions of the persons who buy the babies?" I asked.

"Indeed I don't. I don't want to know anything about them."

Sold to the highest bidder, let them be what they may, let them buy for any purpose they please! Sold by their parents and by the female slave-masters!

Every physician is required, so I believe, to make a report of every birth, with the names and ages of the parents, to the Board of Health. These dealers in baby-slaves acknowledge averaging a birth a day, yet they make no report. This enormous birth-rate in these houses alone must make considerable difference in a year in the census of New York.

I bought my baby from Mrs. Koehler, of East Eighty-fourth street. She is about four feet high and three feet wide. She has been in trouble several times, but by some means she always manages to escape punishment. If she stole a loaf of bread she would be imprisoned, but as she only deals in human flesh she goes free.

"Mrs. Koehler, have you a baby to sell?" I asked, as I sat down in her well-furnished parlor.

"Yes, I have—one born at 2 o'clock this morning," she answered quickly. "It was then 8 in the afternoon. "It is a girl. I will bring it to you," and the slave-dealer went out the door to get the baby slave.

I think probably there was a death in the house that day; at least a vaso of tuberculosis on the centre table suggested such an idea to me. Their perfume was very heavy and oppressive, and I moved nearer the darkened windows in a vain effort to gain a breath of fresh air.

ONLY HALF A DAY OLD.

"Here is the girl," she said, re-entering the room with a bundle in her arms. She took it to a dark corner of the room for me to examine. Her excuse was that the light would hurt its eyes. In reality she wanted to prevent my seeing any blemishes there might be about the baby slave.

It was thirteen hours old, and I bought it. I had no nurse as yet, so I told Mrs. Koehler I would call for it the next day. The woman had been in difficulties before, as I have said, and she fixes up a dummy—a woman to represent the mother—whom she introduces to the buyers, so she may go to her consent. Mrs. Koehler also gives what she pretends is an agreement. This also is to prevent the law from getting its clutches upon her; but it is perfectly worthless, so far as legality is concerned.

"How much do you want for the baby?" I asked when I returned the next day.