PITY THE POOR PANHANDLER;
$2 AN HOUR IS ALL HE GETS

A man dressed in the seedy garb of a "down and outer," possessing a sallow, hungry look, a glib tongue, and a limp, needs to have no fear of the wolf howling at the door as long as he stays in Huntington. By touching an occasional passerby for a "nickel for a cup of coffee," he can make at least five thousand dollars a year by merely sauntering up and down Fourth avenue between Ninth and Tenth streets from 6 to 11 o'clock at night.

In a city-wide investigation of begging conditions carried on by the Marshall College Department of Journalism, I was given the "coffee and soup racket" with the privilege of working the streets anywhere in Huntington. However, I found the window shoppers on Fourth avenue between Ninth and Tenth streets to be a gold mine among themselves. Working from 10 to 11:30 o'clock on Saturday night, I wheedled three dollars from soft-hearted prospects, making 15 round trips between the two streets, and averaging 20 cents a trip. At no time was I referred to the Community Chest or any of its agencies.

I have ample proof of the adage that "love makes the whole world kin." Young fellows with girls who stopped in front of store windows to look at a dress or a coat were sure fire for a dime to a quarter. On only two occasions did I fail to get a touch from this group. One man refused me outright, and the other searched his pockets carefully, but couldn't find any change. I almost offered to change a dollar for him, but caught
myself just in time. Many of these gave me money for fear of letting their girls think they were tight, and others took it as an opportunity to "show off."

I found it almost impossible to get money from men who had reached the "age of discretion." Most of them were wise to the tricks of the hand-out artists. They either said "sorry I'm broke" or gave me a hard look and walked on. Elderly men and women were ready to listen to my sad tale of hard luck, but I never got more than a few pennies or a nickel from them. I did not dare accost unescorted women for fear of being taken for a "masher."

KEEP EYES ON COPS

The chief difficulty was in eluding the police. It was necessary to change to the other side of the street on several occasions, because they are sure on the job and you have to keep a "weather eye" out for a cop every minute of the time. In my role of the sickly young man who had not eaten for three days, I was no fit subject for rough handling or a visit to the Bull Pen of the city jail.

Another difficulty was competition. A short, fat fellow whose shoes were invisible under a pair of ragged trouser legs that swished the pavement was circumnavigating the square holding aloft a lone buffalo nickel. His recitation was simple and to the point. "Mister I need a dime to get a bowl of soup and I only got a nickel. Can you help me out?" He generally got his nickel or more. I followed him around the square four times and he must have collected at least a dollar in that time. Despite the fact that I looked hungrier than he did, he pounced down on me on Fourth avenue, holding up his solitary five cent piece for my inspection. "Mister, I only got . . ."

I cut in on him with "Boy, you oughta have a whole tub of soup by this time."
PITY THE POOR PANHANDLER

He gave me a fishy look and in accents subdued but emphatic invited me to "go to hell."

A "DUPER" IS DUPED

My belief that there is "honor among thieves" got a severe shock when I was "hijacked" out of 85 cents of my ill-gotten gains by an unscrupulous fellow who smelled as though he had drunk deep of perfume or canned heat. Such fumes were never generated in a distillery. I met him on the corner of Ninth street and Third avenue. Being after local color, I started the ball rolling by remarking that the poor man had no place in the oppressive atmosphere of this capitalistic age. He replied in kind and waxed into an eloquent tirade of seditious treason against all organized societies, and remarked as an after-thought that he had not eaten but one sandwich in three days.

With three dollars clinking in my pockets I royally escorted him to a restaurant. The quarter which I intended to plunge on this unhappy man was a pigmy in comparison to his appetite. The depths of his stomach had probably never been plumbed. When the last piece of pie had been consumed the bill was 85 cents, which I paid. Espying a piece of pie which he had dropped on his coat, he pulled out his handkerchief to wipe it off and from its folds dropped a five dollar bill! It suddenly dawned on me that I had been gypped, taken advantage of, and robbed. The man did not even have the good grace to blush. He simply grinned. I immediately gave him the air. He was no fit companion for a young man who wished to keep his amateur standing.

In my opinion the only solution to the deplorable begging conditions found in the city is the Community Chest and its agencies. By referring all requests for charity to the chest, we can be sure that each case will be carefully investigated, the
needy taken care of, and the fakers exposed. My investigation alone shows that the city of Huntington can save a hundred thousand dollars a year on a conservative estimate. Twenty professional beggars, working the city for a year, can make more than the Community Chest has in its entire yearly budget.

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