

Supported by authorities higher up, who are well-known, she has usually refused to admit colored students to certain courses, especially the millinery and power operating courses. She based her refusal on the fact that colored girls trained in those courses could not be placed and said that there were three reasons why they could not be placed: *first*, the colored girls had certain "inherent" qualities which disqualified them for that kind of trade work. *Secondly*, employers objected to taking them, and *thirdly* employees objected to working with them. The principal declared that it took three or four times as long to place one colored girl as it did to place a white girl.

Criticism of the attitude of this principal became so wide spread among colored people that in 1916, through their various social agencies, they proposed to appoint a special assistant to the Placement Secretary, and with the consent of the principal, this was done. The first secretary, Miss Naomi Spencer, served six months, and resigned because of the treatment accorded her. Miss Marshall then wished to end the experiment, being convinced that colored girls were "inherently" incapable of pursuing certain trades successfully, and that the difficulties to be overcome on the part of employers and workers were insurmountable.

Nevertheless the colored people insisted and the second secretary, Mrs. Elise Johnson McDougald was appointed. Mrs. McDougald was an intelligent, long-suffering and determined woman. She had been a teacher in the Public Schools since 1905, and had resigned on account of marriage. She believed in her people and she was not easily discouraged. Above all she knew how herself to meet insult and discrimination by firm insistence, unfaltering determination and unruffled dignity. Various discriminations were at first thrown about her work. In seeking to make a preliminary survey of the courses, the millinery department and the straw operating departments were not shown her at all as these were considered lines of work "into which it would be inadvisable to try to introduce colored girls." The principal declared that the colored girls on the whole were lazy and had "a chip on their shoulders". The Secretary was not permitted to have desk room in the school and was never introduced to the staff and student body. Nevertheless she persisted. Mrs. McDougald found that most of the

teachers in the school were quite unprejudiced and found nothing distinctive about the average colored girl. She was in their opinion like the average white girl. Now and then a teacher was found who believed them inferior and a few who believed them above the average.

#### 4. THE WORK OF MRS. MCDUGALD

Mrs. McDougald's work was divided into securing colored girls suited to trade training, developing more perseverance and determination among them and securing new positions in establishments where colored persons had been denied work. She found first of all that when principals of various schools in the city were asked to send their best colored pupils to the Manhattan Trade School that many of them had already done this and been rebuffed. One white principal said that several of her best colored girls had been denied admittance to the courses they wished. Another teacher said that after continually inspiring her colored pupils toward higher things the closed door of opportunity at that school and elsewhere was "the tragedy of her teaching experience." Mrs. McDougald finally persuaded the principal, in January, 1916, to make clear to the school the work that she was trying to do and she took up the individual cases of the girls.

During the work with individuals, investigations were made into the reported attitude of the girls in elementary schools. In several instances the good attitude recorded in the elementary school had become a bad attitude in Manhattan Trade School. Within the school, one teacher complained while a later teacher commended, and *vice versa*. In one instance a girl pronounced lazy and transferred out of the sewing trade, was found to be subjected outside of school to the most trying conditions. Certain adjustments made possible the assurance of increased physical and mental energy. Reports from the teachers show the effectiveness of this work of developing the pupils by the general improvement along all lines of school work. The teachers expressed interest and thanks, and the girls appreciation.

A survey was made of the various establishments in order to place colored graduates and it was found comparatively easy to open many new avenues of employment. A summary of this phase of the work after eight and one half month's effort is as fol-

lows: Number submitted by principals of the 5 public schools, 31. Girls selected: dressmakers 9; operators 5; milliners 11. Of these there were admitted to the school: 7 dressmakers and 5 operators. Others were kept on a waiting list. This work of securing good material involved 52 visits to schools, agencies and settlements; 263 visits were made to homes in order to encourage the pupils and 269 establishments were interviewed, of whom 203 were willing to take colored help and 66 objected.

Besides the work in the school Mrs. McDougald worked with the colored students in special groups and in these ways, soon changed the group from a sullen, resentful body into pupils who took new pride and initiative in their work. She worked particularly with those employers whom the Regular Placement Secretary had declared were unwilling to employ colored girls. It was stated, for instance, that if Mrs. McDougald could secure the promise of an employer to take a colored girl as a milliner one year hence, that this girl would be admitted to the millinery course of the Manhattan Trade School. Otherwise, not!

#### 5. COLORED WOMEN IN INDUSTRY

This work took the form of personal interviews with the employers and effort to get at their reasons. Where the reason for not employing colored girls was given as being the attitude of the employees, the employers were asked to allow Mrs. McDougald to talk to the employees. This permission was never given. Thereupon Mrs. McDougald turned to the Trades Unions. The Trades Unions were always willing to have her present her case, but they invariably wanted her to help them and to get rid of the Negro as strike breakers. She,

on the other hand, insisted that she would only help under those conditions where she thought that help would encourage the colored worker. If in a particular strike the colored worker had been kept out of the Union and was getting employment through "scabbing" she frankly told the Union that she would stand by the colored workers. And in that way a few Unions opened their doors to numbers of colored workers. When the war came the situation was revolutionized and then if the Trade School had had the colored girls whom they had formerly refused they could have placed them all and more. A good many girls who got into work at that time have been kept since.

The work was gradually leading out into larger avenues, opened up through the smaller work at Manhattan Trade School. The work there revealed a great need for definite knowledge about colored workers. The interest of Miss Rose Schneiderman, the labor leader was enlisted and a scientific survey of colored women in industry was undertaken. With this more definite information as a basis, the United States Employment Service began field work to open up

more opportunities for colored women. For six months Mrs. McDougald continued in that work, and became Field Worker of the United States Employment Service, endeavoring to hold open the field for colored women and to secure further opportunities.

Meantime the Henry Street Settlement had been doing vocational guidance work in the lower East Side. The work of the Henry Street Settlement was then expanded and extended to six schools instead of one.

#### 6. SCHOOL 119

One of the schools chosen was Number



MRS. ELISE JOHNSON MCDUGALD