

"THE FRINGE" OVERLOOKED.

Correspondent Says That Charitable Efforts Were Less This Year.

"One Who Loves Them All" writes to the Free Press as under, making complaint that, in the recent holiday season, there was less concerted charitable work for the sake of poor children than in former years:

"Amid the wonderful generosity and kindness of the citizens of this city in providing for Christmas gladness there were nevertheless hundreds of children who did not get a sugarstick from their benevolent but overbusy friend, Santa Claus. The truth is, Santa is so loyal and true to the empire that his public attentions were almost entirely confined to the different branches connected with the dear soldiers and military interests. 'The poor we always have with us'—the soldiers not always.

The Salvation Army's noble charity was also much curtailed through the overshadowing of war interests. We may feel our duty as keenly as possible to our soldiers and their dependents, but that does not blunt our sense of what is due to destitute children at this, the children's season, and a portion of our community which might be designated as 'The Fringe' should have been overlooked as they were this year.

"We may talk as we like about the 'aliens' and 'foreigners,' but we brought them here. Our naval agents wooed and won them in Europe, and they and their families built our railways in more ways than one, and their dinner can brigade increased the value of our real estate. If our insgovernment allows so many of them to remain unemployed and a burden on the community, if so many men discharged from hospital or otherwise unfit for the manual labor available, so that the mother, in so many cases, has to go out scrubbing and washing to fight off starvation, that is not the fault of the little innocent children—God bless them! If such people are economically unproductive, they are certainly productive in offspring, and a mis-

taken sense of citizenship makes them think that they are benefitting the world by producing the large families that are being brought up under such pitiful conditions. However, not only foreigners but interesting Old Country families went un-blessed and uncheered this Christmas.

"In talking with the staff of the Salvation Army one understood how gladly they would have given to all large hampers, capable of fully loading up a Christmas dinner table. But this sort of ammunition was very inadequate. The writer assisted the distribution of the baskets and can tell as an eyewitness of at least one case, where the food had to be put to cook immediately so real was the hunger. Another large family was discovered at the last minute as it were, without an atom of food on the premises. Not to belittle what was done we must say that the supply the baskets contained was a scanty one. If the Salvation Army's hands were strengthened, that is, well filled, their splendid gifts of former years could be continued. And in addition under favorable auspices a toy, or Santa Claus fund for the children should be inaugurated.

"To one belonging to no league or association freedom may be allowed to speak thus impersonally of the need that this year has seemed a crying one. As to the statement that has been made, that less poverty exists at the present time than formerly, this is true and it is not. The sting of poverty is not in its bulkiness, but in its individual pressure. There certainly could not be the same 'bulk' of need when so many of the unemployed and others of that class have gone overseas. But to those who are still in want deprivation is as pitiless and looms as large as it ever did.

"A reasonable conclusion is that few citizens were aware of the number of little strained eyes and strained hearts that watched in vain for Santa Claus, and to whom even damaged toys would have brought paradise."