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LIZZY GLENN; OR, THE TRIALS OF A SEAMSTRESS

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Содержание

T. S. Arthur
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"Work—work—work
Till the brain begins to swim;
Work—work—work
Till the eyes are heavy and dim!
Seam, and gusset, and band,
Band, and gusset, and seam,
Till over the buttons I fall asleep,
And sew them on in a dream!"

Hood's Song of the Shirt.

LIZZY GLENN; OR, THE TRIALS OF A SEAMSTRESS

CHAPTER I
LIZZY GLENN—MRS. GASTON AND HER SICK CHILD

NEEDLE-WORK, at best, yields but a small return. Yet how many thousands have no other resource in life, no other barrier thrown up between them and starvation! The manly stay upon which a woman has leaned suddenly fails, and she finds self-support an imperative necessity; yet she has no skill, no strength, no developed resources. In all probability she is a mother. In this case she must not only stand alone, but sustain her helpless children. Since her earliest recollection, others have ministered to her wants and pleasures. From a father's hand, childhood and youth received their countless natural blessings; and brother or husband, in later years, has stood between her and the rough winds of a stormy world. All at once, like a bird reared, from a fledgling, in its cage, and then turned loose in dreary winter time, she finds herself in the world, unskilled in its ways, yet required

to earn her bread or perish.

What can she do? In what art or profession has she been educated? The world demands service, and proffers its money for labor. But what has she learned? What work can she perform? She can sew. And is that all? Every woman we meet can ply the needle. Ah! as a seamstress, how poor the promise for her future. The labor-market is crowded with serving women; and, as a consequence, the price of needle-work—more particularly that called plain needle-work—is depressed to mere starvation rates. In the more skilled branches, better returns are met; but even here few can endure prolonged application—few can bend ten, twelve, or fifteen hours daily over their tasks, without fearful inroads upon health.

In the present time, a strong interest has been awakened on this subject. The cry of the poor seamstress has been heard; and the questions "How shall we help her?" "How shall we widen the circle of remunerative employments for women?" passes anxiously from lip to lip. To answer this question is not our present purpose. Others are earnestly seeking to work out the problem, and we must leave the solution with them. What we now design is to quicken their generous impulses. How more effectively can this be done than by a life-picture of the poor needlewoman's trials and sufferings? And this we shall now proceed to give.

It was a cold, dark, drizzly day in the fall of 18—, that a young female entered a well-arranged clothing store in Boston,

and passed with hesitating steps up to where a man was standing behind one of the counters.

"Have you any work, sir?" she asked, in a low, timid voice.

The individual to whom this was addressed, a short, rough-looking man, with a pair of large, black whiskers, eyed her for a moment with a bold stare, and then indicated, by half turning his head and nodding sideways toward the owner of the shop, who stood at a desk some distance back, that her application was to be made there. Turning quickly from the rude and too familiar gaze of the attendant, the young woman went on to the desk and stood, half frightened and trembling, beside the man from whom she had come to ask the privilege of toiling for little more than a crust of bread and a cup of cold water.

"Have you any work, sir?" was repeated in a still lower and more timid voice than that in which her request had at first been made.

"Yes, we have," was the gruff reply.

"Can I get some?"

"I don't know. I'm not sure that you'll ever bring it back again."

The applicant endeavored to make some reply to this, but the words choked her; she could not utter them.

"I've been tricked in my time out of more than a little by new-comers. But I don't know; you seem to have a simple, honest look. Are you particularly in want of work?"

"Oh yes, sir!" replied the applicant, in an earnest, half-imploring voice. "I desire work very much."

"What kind do you want?"

"Almost any thing you have to give out, sir?"

"Well, we have pants, coarse and fine roundabouts, shirts, drawers, and almost any article of men's wear you can mention."

"What do you give for shirts, sir?"

"Various prices; from six cents up to twenty-five, according to the quality of the article."

"*Only* twenty-five cents for fine shirts!" returned the young woman, in a surprised, disappointed, desponding tone.

"*Only* twenty-five cents? *Only*? Yes, *only* twenty-five cents! Pray how much did you expect to get, Miss?" retorted the clothier, in a half-sneering, half-offended voice.

"I don't know. But twenty-five cents is very little for a hard day's work."

"Is it, indeed? I know enough who are thankful even for that. Enough who are at it early and late, and do not even earn as much. Your ideas will have to come down a little, Miss, if you expect to work for this branch of business."

"What do you give for vests and pantaloons?" asked the young woman, without seeming to notice the man's rudeness.

"For common trowsers with pockets, twelve cents; and for finer ones, fifteen and twenty cents. Vests about the same rates."

"Have you any shirts ready?"

"Yes, a plenty. Will you have em coarse or fine?"

"Fine, if you please."

"How many will you take?"

"Let me have three to begin with."

"Here, Michael," cried the man to the attendant who had been first addressed by the stranger, "give this girl three fine shirts to make." Then turning to her, he said: "They are cotton shirts, with linen collars, bosoms, and wristbands. There must be two rows of stitches down the bosoms, and one row upon the wristband. Collars plain. And remember, they must be made very nice."

"Yes, sir," was the reply, made in a sad voice, as the young creature turned from her employer and went up to the shop-attendant to receive the three shirts.

"You've never worked for the clothing stores, I should think?" remarked this individual, looking her in the face with a steady gaze.

"Never," replied the applicant, in a low tone, half shrinking away, with an instinctive aversion for the man.

"Well, it's pretty good when one can't do any better. An industrious sewer can get along pretty well upon a pinch."

No reply was made to this. The shirts were now ready; but, before they were handed to her, the man bent over the counter, and, putting his face close to hers, said—

"What might your name be, Miss?"

A quick flush suffused the neck and face of the girl, as she stepped back a pace or two, and answered—

"That is of no consequence, sir."

"Yes, Miss, but it is of consequence. We never give out work to people who don't tell their names. We would be a set of

unconscionable fools to do that, I should think."

The young woman stood, thoughtful for a little while, and then said, while her cheek still burned—

"Lizzy Glenn."

"Very well. And now, Miss Lizzy, be kind enough to inform me where you live."

"That is altogether unnecessary. I will bring the work home as soon as I have finished it."

"But suppose you should happen to forget our street and number? What then?"

"Oh no, I shall not do that. I know the place very well," was the innocent reply.

"No, but that won't do, Lizzy. We must have the name and place of residence of every man, woman, and child who work for us. It is our rule, and we never depart from it."

There was another brief period of irresolution, and then the place of abode was given. This was first entered, with her name, in a book, and then the three shirts were handed over. The seamstress turned away on receiving them, and walked quickly from the shop.

The appearance of this young applicant for work would have appealed instantly to the sympathies of any one but a regular slop-shop man, who looked only to his own profits, and cared not a fig whose heart-drops cemented the stones of his building. She was tall and slender, with light brown hair, clear soft complexion, and eyes of a mild hazel. But her cheeks were sunken, though

slightly flushed, and her eyes lay far back in their sockets. Her forehead was high and very white. The tones of her voice, which was low, were soft and musical, and her words were spoken, few though they were, with a taste and appropriateness that showed her to be one who had moved in a circle of refinement and intelligence. As to her garments, they were old, and far too thin for the season. A light, faded shawl, of costly material, was drawn closely around her shoulders, but had not the power to keep from her attenuated frame the chill air, or to turn off the fine penetrating rain that came with the wind, searchingly from-the bleak north-east. Her dress, of summer calico, much worn, clung closely to her body. Above all was a close bonnet, and a thick vail, which she drew around her face as she stepped into the street and glided hurriedly away.

"She's a touch above the vulgar, Michael," broke in Berlaps, the owner of the shop, coming forward as he spoke.

"Yes, indeed! That craft has been taut rigged in her time."

"Who can she be, Michael? None of your common ones, of course?"

"Oh no, of course not; she's 'seen better days,' as the slang phrase is."

"No doubt of that. What name did she give."

"Lizzy Glenn. But that may or may not be correct. People likely her are sometimes apt to forget even their own names."

"Where does she live?"

"In the lower part of the town somewhere. I have it in the book

here."

"You think she'll bring them shirts back?"

"Oh, yes. Folks that have come down in the world as she has, rarely play grab-game after that fashion."

"She seemed all struck aback at the price."

"I suppose so. Ha! ha!"

"But she's the right kind," resumed Berlaps. "I only wish we had a dozen like her."

"I wish we had. Her work will never rip."

Further conversation was prevented by the entrance of a customer. Before he had been fully served, a middle-aged woman came in with a large bundle, and went back to Berlaps's desk, where he stood engaged over his account-books.

"Good-day, Mrs. Gaston," said he, looking up, while not a feature relaxed on his cold, rigid countenance.

"I've brought you in six pairs of pants," said the woman, untying the bundle she had laid upon the counter.

"You had seven pair, ma'am."

"I know that, Mr. Berlaps. But only six are finished; and, as I want some money, I have brought them in."

"It is more than a week since we gave them out. You ought to have had the whole seven pair done. We want them all now. They should have been in day before yesterday."

"They would have been finished, Mr. Berlaps," said the woman, in a deprecating tone; "but one of my children has been sick; and I have had to be up with her so often every night, and

have had to attend to her so much through the day, that I have not been able to do more than half work."

"Confound the children!" muttered the tailor to himself, as he began inspecting the woman's work. "They're always getting sick, or something else."

After carefully examining three or four pairs of the coarse trowsers which had been brought in, he pushed the whole from him with a quick impatient gesture and an angry scowl, saying, as he did so—

"Botched to death! I can't give you work unless it's done better, Mrs. Gaston. You grow worse and worse!"

"I know, sir," replied the woman, in a troubled voice, "that they are not made quite so well as they might be. But consider how much I have had against me. A sick child—and worn out by attendance on her night and day."

"It's always a sick child, or some other excuse, with the whole of you. But that don't answer me. I want my work done well, and mean to have it so. If you don't choose to turn out good work, I can find a plenty who will."

"You sha'n't complain of me hereafter, Mr. Berlaps," replied the woman submissively.

"So you have said before; but we shall see."

Berlaps then turned moodily to his desk, and resumed the employment he had broken off when the seamstress came in, whilst she stood with her hands folded across each other, awaiting his pleasure in regard to the payment of the meagre sum she had

earned by a full week of hard labor, prolonged often to a late hour in the night. She had stood thus, meekly, for nearly five minutes, when Berlaps raised his head, and looking at her sternly over the top of his desk, said—

"What are you waiting for, Mrs. Gaston?"

"I should like to have the money for the pants I have brought in. I am out of every"—

"I never pay until the whole job is done. Bring in the other pair, and you can have your money."

"Yes; but Mr. Berlaps"—

"You needn't talk any thing about it, madam. You have my say," was the tailor's angry response.

Slowly turning away, the woman moved, with hesitating steps, to the door, paused there a moment, and then went out. She lingered along, evidently undecided how to act, for several minutes, and then moved on at a quicker pace, as if doubt and uncertainty had given way to some encouraging thought. Threading her way along the narrow winding streets in the lower part of the city, she soon emerged into the open space used as a hay market, and, crossing over this, took her way in the direction of one of the bridges. Before reaching this, she turned down toward the right, and entered a small grocery. A woman was the only attendant upon this.

"Won't you trust me for a little more, Mrs. Grubb?" she asked, in a supplicating voice, while she looked anxiously into her face.

"No, ma'am! not one cent till that dollar's paid up!" was the

sharp retort. "And, to tell you the truth, I think you've got a heap of impudence to come in here, bold-faced, and ask for more trust, after having promised me over and over again for a month to pay that dollar. No! pay the dollar first!"

"I did intend to pay you a part of it this very day," replied Mrs. Gaston. "But"—

"Oh yes. It's 'but' this, and 'but' that. But 'buts' ain't my dollar. I'm an honest woman, and want to make an honest living; and must have my money."

"But I only want a little, Mrs. Grubb. A few potatoes and, some salt fish; and just a gill of milk and a cup of flour. The children have had nothing to eat since yesterday. I took home six pairs of trowsers to-day, which came to ninety cents, at fifteen cents a pair. But I had seven pairs, and Mr. Berlaps wont pay me until I bring the whole number. It will take me till twelve o'clock to-night to finish them, and so I can't get any money before to-morrow. Just let me have two pounds of salt fish, which will be only seven cents, and, three cents' worth of potatoes; and a little milk and flour to make something for Ella. It won't be much, Mrs. Grubb, and it will keep the little ones from being hungry all day and till late to-morrow."

Her voice failed her as she uttered the last sentence. But she restrained herself after the first sob that heaved her overladen bosom, and stood calmly awaiting the answer to her urgent petition.

Mrs. Grubb was a woman, and a mother into the bargain. She

had, too, the remains of a woman's heart, where lingered a few maternal sympathies. These were quick to prompt her to duty. Turning away without a reply, she weighed out two pounds of fish, measured a peck of potatoes, poured out some milk in a cup, and filled a small paper with flour. These she handed to Mrs. Gaston without uttering a word.

"To-morrow you shall be paid for these, and something on the old account," said the recipient, as she took them and hurried from the shop.

"Why not give up at once, instead of trying to keep soul and body together by working for the slop-shops?" muttered Mrs. Grubb, as her customer withdrew. "She'd a great sight better go with her children to the poor-house than keep them half-starving under people's noses at this rate, and compelling us who have a little feeling left, to keep them from dying outright with hunger. It's too bad! There's that Berlaps, who grinds the poor seamstresses who work for him to death and makes them one-half of their time beggars at our stores for something for their children to eat. He is building two houses in Roxbury at this very moment: and out of what? Out of the money of which he has robbed these poor women. Fifteen cents for a pair of trowsers with pockets in them! Ten cents for shirts and drawers! and every thing at that rate. Is it any wonder that they are starving, and he growing rich? Curse him, and all like him! I could see them hung!"

And the woman set her teeth, and clenched her hand, in

momentary but impotent rage.

In the meantime, Mrs. Gaston hurried home with the food she had obtained. She occupied the upper room of a narrow frame house near the river, for which she paid a rent of three dollars a month. It was small and comfortless, but the best her slender means could provide. Two children were playing on the floor when she entered: the one about four, and the other a boy who looked as if he might be nearly ten years of age. On the bed lay Ella, the sick child to whom the mother had alluded, both to the tailor and the shopkeeper. She turned wishfully upon her mother her young bright eyes as she entered, but did not move or utter a word. The children, who had been amusing themselves upon the floor, sprang to their feet, and, catching hold of the basket she had brought in with her, ascertained in a moment its contents.

"Fish and taters! Fish and taters!" cried the youngest, a little girl, clapping her hands, and dancing about the floor.

"Won't we have some dinner now?" said Henry, the oldest boy, looking up into his mother's face with eager delight, as he laid his hands upon her arm.

"Yes, my children, you shall have a good dinner, and that right quickly," returned the mother in a voice half choked with emotion, as she threw off her bonnet, and proceeded to cook the coarse provisions she had obtained at the sacrifice of so much feeling. It did not take long to boil the fish and potatoes, which were eaten with a keen relish by two of the children, Emma and Harry. The gruel prepared for Ella, from the flour obtained at

Mrs. Grubb's, did not much tempt the sickly appetite of the child. She sipped a few spoonfuls, and then turned from the bowl which her mother held for her at the bedside.

"Eat more of it, dear," said Mrs. Gaston. "It will make you feel better."

"I'm not very hungry now, mother," answered Ella.

"Don't it taste good to you?"

"Not very good."

The child sighed as she turned her wan face toward the wall, and the unhappy mother sighed responsive.

"I wish you would try to take a little more. It's so long since you have eaten any thing; and you'll grow worse if you don't take nourishment. Just two or three spoonfuls. Come, dear."

Ella, thus urged, raised herself in bed, and made an effort to eat more of the gruel. At the third spoonful, her stomach heaved as the tasteless fluid touched her lips.

"Indeed, mother, I can't swallow another mouthful," she said, again sinking back on her pillow.

Slowly did Mrs. Gaston turn from the bed. She had not yet eaten of the food, which her two well children were devouring with the eagerness of hungry animals. Only a small portion did she now take for herself, and that was eaten hurriedly, as if the time occupied in attending to her own wants were so much wasted.

The meal over, Mrs. Gaston took the unfinished pair of trowsers, and, though feeling weary and disheartened, bent

earnestly to the task before her. At this she toiled, unremittingly, until the falling twilight admonished her to stop. The children's supper was then prepared. She would have applied to Mrs. Grubb for a loaf of bread, but was so certain of meeting a refusal, that she refrained from doing so. For supper, therefore, they had only the salt fish and potatoes.

It was one o'clock that night before exhausted nature refused another draft upon its energies. The garment was not quite finished. But the nerveless hand and the weary head of the poor seamstress obeyed the requirements of her will no longer. The needle had to be laid aside, for the finger had no more strength to grasp, nor skill to direct its motions.

CHAPTER II
HOW A NEEDLEWOMAN LIVES

IT was about ten o'clock on the next morning, when Mrs. Gaston appeared at the shop of Berlaps, the tailor.

"Here is the other pair," she said, as she came up to the counter, behind which stood Michael, the salesman.

That person took the pair of trowsers, glanced at them a moment, and then, tossing them aside, asked Mrs. Gaston if she could make some cloth roundabouts.

"At what price?" was inquired.

"The usual price—thirty cents."

"Thirty cents for cloth jackets! Indeed, Michael, that is too little. You used to give thirty-seven and a half."

"Can't afford to do it now, then. Thirty cents is enough. There are plenty of women glad to get them even at that price."

"But it will take me a full day and a half to make a cloth jacket, Michael."

"You work slow, that's the reason; a good sewer can easily make one in a day; and that's doing pretty well these times."

"I don't know what you mean by pretty well, Michael," answered the seamstress. "How do you think you could manage to support yourself and three children on less than thirty cents a day?"

"Haven't you put that oldest boy of yours out yet?" asked

Michael, instead of replying to the question of Mrs. Gaston.

"No, I have not."

"Well, you do very wrong, let me tell you, to slave yourself and pinch your other children for him, when he might be earning his living just as well as not. He's plenty old enough to be put out."

"You may think so, but I don't. He is still but a child."

"A pretty big child, I should say. But, if you would like to get him a good master, I know a man over in Cambridge who would take him off of your hands."

"Who is he?"

"He keeps a store, and wants just such a boy to do odd trifles about, and run of errands. It would be the very dandy for your little follow. He'll be in here to-day; and if you say so, I will speak to him about your son."

"I would rather try and keep him with me this winter. He is too young to go so far away. I could not know whether he were well or ill used."

"Oh, as to that, ma'am, the man I spoke of is a particular friend of mine, and I know him to be as kind-hearted as a woman. His wife's amiability and good temper are proverbial. Do let me speak a good word for your son; I'm sure you will never repent it."

"I'll think about it, Michael; but don't believe I shall feel satisfied to let Henry go anywhere out of Boston, even if I should be forced to get him a place away from home this winter."

"Well, you can do as you please, Mrs. Gaston," said Michael in a half offended tone. "I shall not charge any thing for my advice;

But say! do you intend trying some of these jackets?"

"Can't you give me some more pantaloons? I can do better on them, I think."

"We sha'n't have any more coarse trowsers ready for two or three days. The jackets are your only chance."

"If I must, suppose I must, then," replied Mrs. Gaston to this, in a desponding tone. "So let me have a couple of them."

The salesman took from a shelf two dark, heavy cloth jackets, cut out, and tied up in separate bundles with a strip of the fabric from which they had been taken. As he handed them, to the woman he said—

"Remember, now, these are to be made extra nice."

"You shall have no cause of complaint—depend upon that, Michael. But isn't Mr. Berlaps in this morning?"

"No. He's gone out to Roxbury to see about some houses he is putting up there."

"You can pay me for them pantys, I suppose?"

"No. I never settle any bills in his absence."

"But it's a very small matter, Michael. Only a dollar and five cents," said Mrs. Gaston, earnestly, her heart sinking in her bosom.

"Can't help it. It's just as I tell you."

"When will Mr. Berlaps be home?"

"Some time this afternoon, I suppose."

"Not till this afternoon," murmured the mother, sadly, as she thought of her children, and how meagerly she had been able to

provide for them during the past few days. Turning away from the counter, she left the store and hurried homeward. Henry met her at the door as she entered, and, seeing that she brought nothing with her but the small bundles of work, looked disappointed. This touched her feeling a good deal. But she felt much worse when Ella, the sick one, half raised herself from her pillow a said —

"Did you get me that orange, as you promised, mother?"

"No, dear; I couldn't get any money this morning," the mother replied, bending over her sick child and kissing her cheek, that was flushed and hot with fever. "But as soon as Mr. Berlaps pays me, you shall have an orange."

"I wish he would pay you soon then, mother; for I want one so bad. I dreamed last night that I had one, and just as I was going to eat it, I waked up. And, since you have been gone, I've been asleep, and dreamed again that I had a large juicy orange. But don't cry mother. I know you couldn't get it for me. I'll be very patient."

"I know you will, my dear child," said the mother, putting an arm about the little sufferer, and drawing her to her bosom; "you have been good and patient, and mother is only sorry that she has not been able to get you the orange you want so badly."

"But I don't believe I want it so very, very bad, mother, as I seem to. I think about it so much—that's the reason I want it, I'm sure. I'll try and not think about it any more."

"Try, that's a dear, good girl," murmured Mrs. Gaston, as she

kissed her child again, and then turned away to resume once more her wearying task. Unrolling one of the coarse jackets she had brought home, she found that it was of heavy beaver cloth, and had to be sewed with strong thread. For a moment or two, after she spread it out upon the table, she looked at the many pieces to be wrought up into a well-finished whole, and thought of the hours of hard labor it would require to accomplish the task. A feeling of discouragement stole into her heart, and she leaned her head listlessly upon the table. But only a moment or two elapsed before a thought of her children aroused her flagging energies.

It was after eleven o'clock before she was fairly at work. The first thing to be done, after laying aside the different portions of the garment in order, was to put in the pockets. This was not accomplished before one o'clock, when she had to leave her work to prepare a meal for herself and little ones. There remained from their supper and breakfast, a small portion of the fish and potatoes. Both of these had been boiled, and hashed up together, and, of what remained, all that was required was to make it into balls and fry it. This was not a matter to occasion much delay. In fifteen minutes from the time she laid aside her needle and thimble, the table had been set, with its one dish upon it, and Harry and little Emma were eating with keen appetites their simple meal. But, to Mrs. Gaston, the food was unpalatable; and Ella turned from it with loathing. There was, however, nothing more, in the house; and both Ella and her mother had to practice self-denial and patience.

After the table was cleared away, Mrs. Gaston again resumed her labor; but Emma was unusually fretful, and hung about her mother nearly the whole afternoon, worrying her mind, and keeping her back a good deal, so that, when the brief afternoon had worn away, and the deepening twilight compelled her to suspend her labors, she had made but little perceptible progress in her work.

"Be good children now until I come back," she said, as she rose from her chair, put on her, bonnet, and drew an old Rob Roy shawl around her shoulders. Descending then into the street, she took her way with a quick step toward that part of the city in which her employer kept his store. Her heart beat anxiously as she drew near, and trembled lest she should not find him in. If not?—but the fear made her feel sick. She had no food in the house, no friends to whom she could apply, and there was no one of whom she could venture to ask to be trusted for even a single loaf of bread. At length she reached the well-lighted store, in which were several customers, upon whom both Berlaps and his clerk were attending with business assiduity. The sight of the tailor relieved the feelings of poor Mrs. Gaston very much. Passing on to the back part of the store, she stood patiently awaiting his leisure. But his customers were hard to please. And, moreover, one was scarcely suited, before another came in. Thus it continued for nearly half an hour, when, the poor woman became so anxious about the little ones she had left at home, and especially about Ella, who had appeared to have a good deal

of fever when she came away, that she walked slowly down the store, and paused opposite to where Berlaps stood waiting upon a customer, in order to attract his attention. But he took not the slightest notice of her. She remained thus for nearly ten minutes longer. Then she came up to the side of the counter, and, leaning over toward him, said, in a half whisper—

"Can I speak a word with you, Mr. Berlaps?"

"I've no time to attend to you now, woman," he answered, gruffly, and the half-frightened creature shrunk away quickly, and again stood far back in the store.

It was full half an hour after this before the shop was cleared, and then the tailor, instead of coming back to where Mrs. Gaston stood, commenced folding up and replacing his goods upon the shelves. Fearful lest other customers would enter, the seamstress came slowly forward, and again stood near Berlaps.

"What do you want here to-night, woman?" asked the tailor, without lifting his eyes from the employment in which he was engaged.

"I brought home the other pair of trowsers this morning, but you were not in," Mrs. Gaston replied.

"Well?"

"Michael couldn't pay me, and so I've run up this evening."

"You're a very troublesome kind of a person," said Berlaps, looking her rebukingly in the face. Then taking a dollar and five cents from the drawer, he pushed them toward her on the counter, adding, as he did so, "There, take your money. One would think

you were actually starving."

Mrs. Gaston picked up the coin eagerly, and hurried away. It was more than an hour since she had left home. Her children were alone, and the night had closed in some time before. The thought of this made her quicken her pace to a run. As she passed on, the sight of an orange in a window reminded her of her promise to Ella. She stopped and bought a small one, and then hurried again on her way.

"Here's half a dollar of what I owe you, Mrs. Grubb," said she, as she stepped into the shop of that personage, and threw the coin she named upon the counter. "And now give me a loaf of bread, quickly; some molasses in this cup, and a pint of milk in this," drawing two little mugs from under her shawl as she spoke.

The articles she mentioned were soon ready for her. She had paid for them, and was about stepping from the door, when she paused, and, turning about, said:

"Oh, I had like to have forgotten! I want two cent candles. I shall have to work late to-night."

The candles were cut from a large bunch hanging above the narrow counter, wrapped in a very small bit of paper, and given to Mrs. Gaston, who took them and went quickly away.

All was dark and still in the room that contained her children, as she gained the house that sheltered them. She lit one of her candles below, and went up-stairs. As she entered, Ella's bright eyes glistened upon her from the bed; but little Emma had fallen asleep with her head in the lap of Henry, who was seated upon

the floor with his back against the wall, himself likewise locked in the arms of forgetfulness. The fire had nearly gone out, and the room was quite cold.

"Oh, mother, why did yon stay so long?" Ella asked, looking her earnestly in the face.

"I couldn't get back any sooner, my dear. But see! I've brought the orange you have wished for so long. You can eat it all by yourself, for Emma is fast asleep on the floor, and can't cry for it."

But Emma roused up, at the moment, and began to fret and cry for something to eat.

"Don't cry, dear. You shall have your supper in a little while. I have brought you home some nice bread and molasses," said the mother, in tones meant to soothe and quiet her hungry and impatient little one. But Emma continued to fret and cry on.

"It's so cold, mamma!" she said. "It's so cold, and I'm hungry!"

"Don't cry, dear," again urged the mother. "I'll make the fire up nice and warm in a little while, and then you shall have something good to eat."

But—"It's so cold, mamma! it's so cold, and I'm hungry!" was the continued and incessant complaint of the poor child.

All this time, Ella had been busily engaged in peeling her orange, and dividing it into four quarters.

"See here, Emma! Look what I've got!" she said, in a lively, cheerful tone, as soon as her orange had been properly divided. "Come, cover up in bed here with me, until the fire's made, and

you shall have this nice bit of orange."

Emma's complaints ceased in a moment, and she turned toward her sister, and clambered upon the bed.

"And here's a piece for you, Henry, and a piece for mother, too," continued Ella, reaching out two other portions.

"No, dear, keep it for yourself. I don't want it," said the mother.

"And Emma shall have my piece," responded Henry; "she wants it worse than I do."

"That is right. Be good children, and, love one another," said Mrs. Gaston, encouragingly. "But Emma don't want brother Henry's piece, does she?"

"No, Emma don't want brother Henry's piece," repeated the child; and she took up a portion of the orange as she spoke, and handed it to her brother.

Henry received it; and, getting upon the bed with his sisters, shared with them not only the orange, but kind fraternal feelings. The taste of the fruit revived Ella a good deal and she, with the assistance of Henry, succeeded in amusing Emma until their mother had made the fire, and boiled some water. Into a portion of the water she poured about half of the milk she had brought home, and, filling a couple of tin cups with this, set it with bread and molasses upon a little table, and called Henry and Emma to supper. The children, at this announcement, scrambled from the bed, and, pushing chairs up to the table, commenced eating the supper provided for them with keen appetites. Into what

remained of the pint of milk, Mrs. Gaston poured a small portion of hot water, and then crumbled some bread, and put a few grains of salt into it, and took this to the bed for Ella. The child ate two or three spoonsful; but her stomach soon turned against the food.

"I don't feel hungry, mother," said she, as she laid herself back upon the pillow.

"But you've eaten scarcely any thing to-day: Try and take a little more, dear. It will do you good."

"I can't, indeed, mother." And a slight expression of loathing passed over the child's face.

"Can't you think of something you could eat?" urged the mother.

"I don't want any thing. The orange tasted good, and that is enough for to-night," Ella replied, in a cheerful voice.

Mrs. Gaston then sat down by the table with Henry and Emma, and ate a small portion of bread and molasses. But this food touched not her palate with any pleasurable sensation. She ate, only because she knew that, unless, she took food, she would not have strength to perform her duties to her children. For a long series of years, her system had been accustomed to the generous excitement of tea at the evening meal. A cup of good tea had become almost indispensable to her. It braced her system, cleared her head, and refreshed her after the unremitting toils of the day. But, for some time past, she had felt called upon, for the sake of her children, to deny herself this luxury—no, comfort—no, this, to her, one of the necessaries of life. The

consequence was that her appetite lost its tone. No food tasted pleasantly to her; and the labors of the evening were performed under depression of spirits and nervous relaxation of body.

This evening she ate, compulsorily, as usual, a small portion of dry bread, and drank a few mouthfuls of warm water, in which a little milk had been poured. As she did so, her eyes turned frequently upon the face of Henry, a fair-haired, sweet-faced, delicate boy, her eldest born—the first pledge of pure affection, and the promise of a happy wedded life. Sadly, indeed, had time changed since then. A young mother, smiling over her first born—how full of joy was the sunlight of each succeeding day! Now, widowed and alone, struggling with failing and unequal strength against the tide that was slowly bearing her down the stream, each morning broke to her more and, more drearily, and each evening, as it closed darkly in, brought another shadow to rest in despondency upon her spirit.

Faithfully had she struggled on, hoping still to be able to keep her little ones around her. The proposition of Michael to put out Henry startled into activity the conscious fear that had for some months been stifled in her bosom; and now she had to look the matter full in the face, and, in spite of all her feelings of reluctance, confess to herself that the effort to keep her children around her must prove unavailing. But how could she part with her boy? How could she see him put out among strangers? How could she bear to let him go away from her side, and be henceforth treated as a servant, and be compelled to perform

labor above his years? The very thought made her sick.

Her frugal meal was soon finished, and then the children were put to bed. After laying away their clothes, and setting back the table from which their supper had been eaten, Mrs. Gaston seated herself by the already nearly half burned penny candle, whose dim light scarcely enabled her failing eyesight to discern the edges of the dark cloth upon which she was working, and composed herself to her task. Hour after hour she toiled on, weary and aching in every limb. But she remitted not her labors until long after midnight, and then not until her last candle had burned away to the socket in which it rested. Then she put aside her work with a sigh, as she reflected upon the slow progress she had made, and, disrobing herself, laid her over-wearied body beside that of her sick child. Ella was asleep; but her breathing was hard, and her mother perceived, upon laying her hand upon her face, that her fever had greatly increased. But she knew no means of alleviation, and therefore did not attempt any. In a little while, nature claimed for her a respite. Sleep locked her senses in forgetfulness.

CHAPTER III
DEATH OF MRS. GASTON'S CHILD.—A MOTHER'S ANGUISH

ON the next morning, at the earliest dawn, Mrs. Gaston arose. She found Ella's fever still very high. The child was restless, and moaned a good deal in her sleep.

"Poor little thing!" murmured the mother, as she bent over her for a moment, and then turned away, and commenced kindling a fire upon the hearth. Fortunately, for her, she had saved enough from her earnings during the summer to buy half a cord of wood; but this was gradually melting away, and she was painfully conscious that, by the time the long and severe winter had fairly set in, her stock of fuel would be exhausted; and at the prices which she was receiving for her work, she felt that it would be impossible to buy more. After making the fire, she took her work, and drew near the window, through which the cold faint rays of the morning were stealing. By holding the work close to the light, she could see to set her needle, and in this way she commenced her daily toil. An hour was spent in sewing, when Emma aroused up, and she had to lay by her work to attend to her child. Ella, too, had awakened, and complained that her head ached badly, and that her throat was very sore. Half an hour was spent in dressing, washing, and otherwise attending to her

children, and then Mrs. Gaston went out to get something for breakfast. On entering the shop of Mrs. Grubb, she met with rather a more courteous reception than had been given her on the morning previous.

"Ah! good-morning, Mrs. Gaston! Good-morning!" said that personage, with a broad, good-natured smile. "How is Ella?"

"She seems very poorly, Mrs. Grubb. I begin to feel troubled about her. She complains of a sore throat this morning, and you know the scarlet fever is all about now."

"Oh, no! never fear that, Mrs. Gaston. Ella's not down with the scarlet fever, I know."

"I trust not. But I have my fears."

"Never take trouble on interest, Mrs. Gaston. It is bad enough when it comes in the natural way. But what can I do for you?"

"I think I must have a cent's worth of coffee this morning. My head aches so that I am almost blind. A strong cup of coffee I am sure will do me good. And as I have a hard day's work before me, I must prepare for it. And then I must have a pint of milk and a three-cent loaf of bread for the children. That must do me for the present. We have some molasses left."

"You'll want a little dried meat, or a herring, or something to give you a relish, Mrs. Gaston. Dry bread is poor eating. And you know you can't touch molasses." Half in sympathy did Mrs. Grubb utter this, and half as a dealer, desirous of selling her goods.

"Nothing more just now, I believe," the poor woman replied.

"I must be prudent, you know, and count over every cent."

"But you'll make yourself sick, if you don't eat something more than you do. So come now; treat yourself to a herring, or to a penny's worth of this sweet butter. You'll feel all the better for it, and do more than enough work to pay the cost twice over."

Mrs. Gaston's appetite was tempted. The hard fresh butter looked inviting to her eyes, and she stooped over and smelled it half involuntarily.

"I believe you are right, Mrs. Grubb," she said. "You may give me a couple of cents' worth of this nice butter."

An ounce of butter was carefully weighed out, and given to the customer.

"Isn't there something else, now, that you want?" said the smiling shopkeeper, leaning her elbows upon the counter, and looking encouragingly into the face of Mrs. Gaston.

"I've indulged myself, and I shall not feel right, unless I indulge the children a little also," was the reply; "so weigh me two cents' worth of your smoked beef. They all like it very much."

The smoked beef was soon ready, and then the mother hurried home to her children.

After the morning meal had been prepared, Mrs. Gaston sat down and ate her bread and butter, tasting a little of the children's meat, and drinking her coffee with a keen relish. She felt braced up on rising from the table, and, but for the illness of Ella, would have felt an unusual degree of cheerfulness.

Henry attended the common school of the district, and, soon

after breakfast, prepared himself to go. As he was leaving, his mother told him to call at Doctor R—'s, and ask him if he would be kind enough to stop and see Ella. She then seated herself once more beside her little work-table. The two foreparts of the jacket had been finished, except the button-holes; and the sleeves were ready to put in as soon as the body of the garment was ready for them. As the button-holes tried the sight of Mrs. Gaston severely, she chose that part of the day, when her eyes were fresh, to work them. The jacket was double-breasted, and there were five holes to be worked on each side. She had nearly completed one-half of them, when Doctor R—came in. He looked serious upon examining his patient. Said she was very ill, and required immediate attention.

"But you don't think it the scarlet fever, doctor?" the mother said, in a low, alarmed voice.

"Your child is very sick, madam; and, to tell you the truth, her symptoms resemble too closely those of the fever you have named," was the undisguised reply.

"Surely, my cup is full and running over!" sobbed Mrs. Gaston, clasping her hands together as this sudden announcement broke down, for a moment, her self-control, while the tears gushed from her eyes.

Doctor R—was a man of true feeling. He had attended, in two or three cases of illness, the children of Mrs. Gaston, and had observed that she was a woman who had become, from some cause, greatly reduced in circumstances. His sympathies were

strongly awakened at seeing her emotion, and he said, in a kind but firm voice:

"A mother, the safety of whose child depends upon her calm and intelligent performance of duty, should never lose her self-control."

"I know that, doctor," the mother answered, rallying herself with a strong effort. "But I was over-tried already, and your sudden confirmation of my worst fears completely broke me down."

"In any event, however," the doctor replied, "you must not permit yourself to forget that your child is in the hands of Him who regards its good in a far higher sense than you can possibly. He never permits sickness of any kind without a good end."

"I know that, doctor, but I have a mother's heart. I love my children, and the thought of losing them touches me to the quick."

"And yet you know that, in passing from this to another state of existence, their condition must be bettered beyond comparison."

"Oh, yes. Beyond comparison!" replied the mother, half abstractedly, but with touching pathos. "And yet, doctor, I cannot spare them. They are every thing to me."

"Do not suffer yourself to indulge needless alarm. I will leave you medicine now, and call again to-morrow. If she should be decidedly worse, send for me toward evening."

After the doctor went away, Mrs. Gaston gave the medicine

he had left, as directed, and then forced herself from the bedside, and resumed her work. By the time the button-holes of the garment she was engaged upon were all completed, and the back and shoulder seams sewed up, it was time to see about something for dinner. She put aside the jacket, and went to the bed. Ella lay as if asleep. Her face was flushed, and her skin dry and hot. The mother looked upon her for a few moments with a yearning heart; then, turning away, she took from a closet her bonnet and shawl, and a little basket. Passing quickly down-stairs, after telling Emma to keep very still and be a good girl until she came back, she took her way toward the market-house. At a butcher's she obtained, for three cents, some bones, and then at one of the stalls bought a few herbs, a head of cabbage, and three turnips; the whole at a cost of sixpence.

With these she returned home, renewed her fire, and, after preparing the bones and vegetables she had procured, put them into an iron pot with some water, and hung this upon the crane. She then sat down again to her work.

At twelve o'clock Henry came in from school, and brought up an armful of wood, and some water, and then, by direction of his mother, saw that the fire was kept burning briskly. At one, Mrs. Gaston laid by her work again, and set the table for dinner. Henry went for a loaf of bread while she was doing this, and upon his return found all ready. The meal, palatable to all, was a well-made soup; the mother and her two children ate of it with keen appetites. When it was over, Henry went away again

to school and Mrs. Gaston, after administering to Ella another dose of medicine, sat down once more to her work. One sleeve remained to be sewed in, when the garment would only require to have the collar put on, and be pressed off. This occupied her until late in the afternoon.

"Thirty cents for all that!" she sighed to herself, as she laid the finished garment upon the bed. "Too bad! Too bad! How can a widow and three children subsist on twenty cents a day?"

A deep moan from Ella caused her to look at her child more intently than she had done for half an hour. She was alarmed to find that her face had become like scarlet, and was considerably swollen. On speaking to her, she seemed quite stupid, and answered incoherently, frequently putting her hand to her throat, as if in pain there. This confirmed the mother's worst fears for her child, especially as she was in a raging fever. Soon after, Henry came in from school, and she dispatched him for Doctor R—, who returned with the boy. He seemed uneasy at the manner in which the symptoms were developing themselves. A long and silent examination ended in his asking for a basin. He bled her freely, as there appeared to be much visceral congestion, and an active inflammation of the tonsils, larynx, and air passages, with a most violent fever. After this she lay very still, and seemed much relieved. But, half an hour after the doctor had left, the fever rallied again, with burning intensity. Her face swelled rapidly, and the soreness of her throat increased. About nine o'clock the doctor came in again, and upon examining the

child's throat, found it black and deeply ulcerated.

"What do you think of her, doctor?" asked the poor mother, eagerly.

"I think her very ill, madam—and, I regret to say, dangerously so."

"Is it scarlet fever, doctor?"

"It is, madam. A very bad case of it. But do not give way to feelings of despondency. I have seen worse cases recover."

More active medicines than any that had yet been administered were given by the doctor, who again retired, with but little hope of seeing his patient alive in the morning.

From the time Mrs. Gaston finished the garment upon which she had been working, she had not even unrolled the other roundabout, and it was now nine o'clock at night. A sense of her destitute condition, and of the pressing necessity there was for her to let every minute leave behind some visible impression, made her, after Henry and Emma were in bed, leave the side of her sick child, though with painful reluctance, and resume her toil. But, ever and anon, as Ella moaned, or tossed restlessly upon her pillow, would the mother lay by her work, and go and stand beside her in silent anguish of spirit, or inquire where she suffered pain, or what she could do to relieve her.

Thus passed the hours until twelve, one, and two o'clock, the mother feeling that her child was too sick for her to seek repose, and yet, as she could do nothing to relieve her sufferings, she could not sit idly by and look upon her. For fifteen or twenty

minutes at a time she would ply her needle, and then get up and bend over the bed for a minute or two. A thought of duty would again call her back to her position by the work-table, where she would again devote herself to her task, in spite of an aching head, and a reluctant, over-wearied body. Thus she continued until near daylight, when there was an apparent subsidence of Ella's most painful symptoms. The child ceased to moan and throw herself about, and finally sunk into slumber. In some relief of mind, Mrs. Gaston laid down beside her upon the bed, and, in a little while was fast asleep. When she awoke, the sun had been up some time, and was shining brightly into the room. Quickly rising, her first glance was toward her sick child. She could scarcely suppress a cry of agony, as she perceived that her face and neck had swollen so as to appear puffed up, while her skin was covered with livid spots. An examination of the chest and stomach showed that these spots were extending themselves over her whole body. Besides these signs of danger, the breathing of the child was more like gasping, as she lay with her mouth half opened.

The mother laid her hand upon her arm, and spoke to her. But she did not seem to hear the voice.

"Ella, dear! how do you feel this morning?" repeated Mrs. Gaston in louder and more earnest tones.

But the child heeded her not. She was already past consciousness! At an early hour Doctor R—came in. The moment he looked at his patient his countenance fell. Still, he

proceeded to examine her carefully. But every symptom was alarming, and indicated a speedy fatal termination, this was especially the case with the upper part of the throat, which was black. Nothing deeper could be seen, as the tonsils were so swollen as to threaten suffocation.

"Is there any hope, doctor?" asked Mrs. Gaston, eagerly, laying her hand upon his arm as he turned from the bed.

"There is always hope where there is life, madam," he replied, abstractedly; and then in a thoughtful mood took two or three turns across the narrow apartment.

"I will come again in an hour," he at length said, "and see if there is any change. I would rather not give her any more medicine for the present. Let her remain perfectly quiet."

True to his promise, Doctor R—entered the room just an hour from the time he left it. The scene that met his eye moved his heart deeply, all used as he was to the daily exhibition of misery in its many distressing forms. The child was dead! He was prepared for that—but not for the abandoned grief to which the mother gave way. The chords of feeling had been drawn in her heart too tightly. Mind and body were both out of tune, and discordant. In suffering, in abject want and destitution, her heart still clung to her children, and threw around them a sphere of intenser affection, as all that was external grew darker, colder, and more dreary. They were her jewels, and she could not part with them. They were hidden away in her heart of hearts so deeply, that not a single one of them could be taken without

leaving it lacerated and bleeding.

When the doctor entered, he found her lying upon the bed, with the body of her child hugged tightly to her bosom. Little Emma had crept away into a corner of the room, and looked frightened. Henry was crouching in a chair, with the tears running down his cheeks in streams.

"You are too late, doctor," said the mother, in a tone so calm, so clear, and yet to his ear so thrilling, that he started, and felt a chill pass through his frame. There was something in the sound of that voice in ill accordance with the scene.

As she spoke, she glanced at the physician with bright, tearless eyes for a moment; and then, turning away her head, she laid her cheek against that of the corpse, and drew the lifeless body with trembling eagerness to her heart.

"This is all vain, my dear madam!" urged Dr. R—, approaching the bedside, and laying his hand upon her. "Come! Be a woman. To bear is to conquer our fate. No sorrow of yours can call back the happy spirit of your child. And, surely, you would not call her back, if you could, to live over the days of anguish and pain that were meted out to her?"

"I cannot give up my child, doctor. Oh, I cannot give up my child! It will break my heart!" she replied, her voice rising and trembling more and more at each sentence, until it gave way, and the hot tears came raining over her face, and falling upon the insensible cheek of her child.

"'The Lord giveth, and the Lord taketh away,' Mrs. Gaston.

Can you not look up, even in this sore affliction, and say, 'Blessed be the name of the Lord?' It is your only hope. An arm of flesh cannot support you now. You must look to the Strong for strength."

As Doctor R—thus urged her to reason and duty, the tears of the bereaved mother gradually ceased to flow. She grew calmer, and regained, in some degree, her self-possession. As she did so, she slowly disengaged her arm from the body of her child, placed its head, as carefully as if it had been asleep, upon the pillow, and then arose, and stood with her hands tightly clasped across her forehead.

"I am but a weak woman, doctor, and you must bear with me," said she, in a changed voice. "I used to have fortitude; but I feel that I am breaking fast. I am not what I was."

The last two sentences were spoken in a tone so sad and mournful, that the doctor could scarcely keep back the tears.

"You have friends here, I suppose," he remarked, "who will be with you on this afflicting occasion?"

"I have no friends," she replied, in the same sad voice. "I and my children are alone in this hard world. Would to heaven we were all with Ella!" Her tears again gushed forth and flowed freely.

"Then I must send some one who will assist you in your present need," said Dr. R—; and turning away he left the room, and, getting into his chaise, rode off at a brisk pace. In about a quarter of an hour, he returned with a woman who took charge

of the body of the child, and performed for it the last sad offices that the dead require.

Upon close inquiry, he ascertained from Mrs. Gaston that she was in a state of extreme destitution; that so far from having the means to bury her dead child, she was nearly without food to give to her living ones. To meet this pressing need, he went to a few benevolent friends, and procured money sufficient to inter the corpse, and about ten dollars over. This he gave to her after the funeral, at which there were only three mourners, the mother and her two children.

CHAPTER IV
LIZZY GLENN AROUSES THE INTEREST OF A STRANGER

BERLAPS was leaning over his counter late in the afternoon of the second day from that on which the person calling herself Lizzy Glenn had applied for and obtained work, when a young man entered and asked for some article of dress. While the tailor was still engaged in waiting upon him, the young woman came in, carrying a small bundle in her hand. Her vail was drawn over her face as she entered; but was thrown partly aside as she retired to the back part of the store, where she stood awaiting the leisure of the man from whom she had obtained work. As she passed him, the customer turned and looked at her earnestly for a moment or two, and then asked in a whisper—

"Who is that?"

"Only one of our sewing-girls," replied Berlaps, indifferently.

"What is her name?"

"I forget. She's a girl to whom we gave out work day before yesterday."

This paused the man to look at her more attentively. The young woman, becoming conscious that she was an object of close scrutiny by a stranger, turned partly away, so that her face could not be seen.

"There is something singularly familiar about her," mused the young man as he left the store. "Who can she be? I have certainly seen her before."

"Ah, good-afternoon, Perkins!" said a familiar voice, while a friendly hand was laid upon his arm. "You seem to be in a browner mood than usual!"

"I am a little thoughtful, or abstracted, just as you please," replied the individual addressed.

"Are you, indeed? May I ask the reason?"

"The reason hardly seems to be a sufficient one—and, therefore, I will not jeopardize your good opinion of me by mentioning it."

"O, very well! I am content to have my friends conceal from me their weaknesses."

The two young men then walked on arm and arm for some distance. They seemed to be walking more for the sake of a little conversation than for any thing else, for they went slowly, and after winding about among the labyrinthine streets for ten or twenty minutes, took their way back again.

"There she is again, as I live!" Perkins exclaimed, half pausing, as the young woman he had seen at the tailor's passed quickly by them on their turning a corner.

"You've noticed her before, then?" remarked the friend, whose name was Milford.

"I saw her a little while ago in a clothing store; and her appearance instantly arrested my attention. Do you know who

she is?"

"I do not. But I'd give something to know. You saw her in a clothing store?"

"Yes. In the shop of that close-fisted Berlaps. She is one of his seamstresses—a new one, by the way—to whom he has just given work. So he informed me."

"Indeed! She must be in great extremity to work for his pay. It is only the next remove, I am told, from actual starvation."

"But tell me what you know of her, Milford. She seems to have attracted your notice, as well as mine."

"I know nothing of her whatever," replied the young man, "except that I have met her five or six times during the last two weeks, upon the Warren Bridge, on her way to Charlestown. Something in her appearance arrested my attention the first time I saw her. But I have never been able to catch more than a glimpse of her face. Her vail is usually drawn."

"Who can she visit in Charlestown?"

"No one, I have good reason to think."

"Why so?"

"I had once the curiosity to follow her as far as I deemed it prudent and courteous. She kept on entirely through the town—at least through the thickly settled portion of it. Her step was too quick for the step of one who was merely going to pay a friendly visit."

"You have had, if I understand you, at least a glimpse of her countenance?"

"Yes. Once, in passing her, her vail was half drawn aside, as if to get a freer draught of air."

"And her face?"

"Was thin and pale."

"And beautiful?"

"So I should call it. Not pretty—not a mere doll's face—but intellectually beautiful; yet full of softness. In fact, the face of a woman with a mind and heart. But sorrow had touched her—and pain. And, above all, the marks of crushed affection were too plainly visible upon her young countenance. All this could be seen at the single glance I obtained, before her vail was drawn hurriedly down."

"Strange that she should seek so to hide her face from every eye. Can it be that she is some one we have known, who has fallen so low?"

"No, I think not," replied Milford. "I am certain that I have never seen her before. Her face is a strange one to me. At least, the glance I had revealed no familiar feature."

"Well, I, for one, am resolved to know more about her," remarked Perkins, as the two friends paused before separating. "Since she has awakened so sudden, and yet so strong an interest in my mind, I should feel that I was not doing right if I made no effort to learn something of her true position in our city, where, I am much inclined to think, she is a stranger."

The young men, after a few more words, separated, Perkins getting into an "hourly" and going oyer to Charlestown to see a

man on some business who could not be at his house until late in the day. The transaction of this business took more time than he had expected, and it was nearly an hour after nightfall before he returned to Boston. After passing the "draw," as he crossed the old bridge, he perceived by the light of a lamp, some distance ahead, a female figure hurrying on with rapid steps.

"It's the strange girl I saw at Berlaps', as I live!" he mentally ejaculated, quickening his pace. "I must see where she hides herself away."

The night was very dark, and the form of the stranger, as she hurried forward, was soon buried in obscurity. In a little while, she emerged into the little circle of light that diffused itself around the lamp that stood at the termination of the bridge, and in the next moment was again invisible. Perkins now pressed forward, and was soon clear of the bridge, and moving along the dark, lonely avenue that led up to the more busy part of the city. He had advanced here but a few paces, when a faint scream caused him to bound onward at full speed. In a moment after, he came to the corner of a narrow, dark street, down which he perceived two forms hurrying; one, a female, evidently struggling against the superior force of the other.

His warning cry, and the sound of his rapidly advancing footsteps, caused the man to relax his hold, when the female figure glided away with wind-like fleetness. The man hesitated an instant; but, before Perkins reached the spot where he stood, ran off in an opposite direction to that taken by the woman.

Here was an adventure calculated to give to the mind of Perkins a new and keener interest in the young seamstress. He paused but a moment, and then ran at the height of his speed in the direction the female form, which he had good reason to believe was hers, had taken. But she was nowhere to be seen. Either she had sought a shelter in one of the houses, or had hurried forward with a fleetness that carried her far beyond his reach.

Thoughtful and uneasy in mind, he could hardly tell why, he sought his lodgings; and, retiring at once to his chamber, seated himself by a table upon which were books and papers, and soon became lost in sad memories of the past that strongly linked themselves, why he could not tell, for they had no visible connection, with the present. For a long time he sat in this abstract mood, his hand shading his face from the light. At last he arose slowly and went to a drawer, from which he took a small morocco case, and, returning with it to the table, seated himself again near the lamp. He opened the case, and let the light fall strongly upon the miniature of a most beautiful female. Her light brown hair, that fell in rich and glossy ringlets to her neck, relieved tastefully her broad white forehead, and the gentle roundness of her pure cheeks, that were just tinged with the flush of health and beauty. But these took not away from the instant attraction of her dark hazel eyes, that beamed tenderly upon the gazer's face. Perkins bent for many minutes over this sweet image; then pressing it to his lips, he murmured, as he

leaned back, and lifted his eyes to the ceiling—

"Where, where in the spirit-land dost thou dwell, dear angel? In what dark and undiscovered cave of the ocean rests, in dreamless sleep, thy beautiful but unconscious body? Snatched from me in the bloom of youth, when fresh flowers blossomed in thy young heart to bless me with their fragrance, how hast thou left me in loneliness and desolation of spirit! And yet thou seemest near to me, and, of late, nearer and dearer than ever. Oh, that I could hear thy real voice, even if spoken to the ear of my spirit, and see once more thy real face, were it only a spiritual presence!"

The young man then fell into a dreamy state of mind, in which we will leave him for the present.

CHAPTER V
SOME OF THE TROUBLES OF A NEEDLEWOMAN. —A FRIEND IN NEED

THE prompt assistance rendered, by Dr. R—to Mrs. Gaston came just in time. It enabled her to pay her month's rent, due for several days, to settle the amount owed to Mrs. Grubb, and lay in more wood for the coming winter. This consumed all her money, and left her once more dependent upon the meagre reward of her hard labor to supply food and clothing for herself and her two remaining children. From a state of almost complete paralysis of mind, consequent upon the death of Ella, her necessities aroused her. On the second day after the child had been taken, she again resumed her suspended toil. The sight of the unfinished garment which had been laid aside after bending over it nearly the whole night previous to the morning upon which Ella died, awakened a fresh emotion of grief in her bosom. As this gradually subsided, she applied herself with patient assiduity to her task, which was not finished before twelve o'clock that night, when she laid herself down with little Emma in her arms, and soon lost all care and trouble in profound sleep.

Hasty pudding and molasses composed the morning meal for all. After breakfast, Mrs. Gaston took the two jackets, which had

been out now five days to the shop.

"Why, bless me, Mrs. Gaston, I thought you had run off with them jackets!" was Michael's coarse salutation as she came in. The poor, heart-oppressed seamstress could not trust herself to reply, but laid her work upon the counter in silence. Berlaps, seeing her, came forward.

"These kind of doings will never answer, madam!" he said angrily. "I could have sold both jackets ten times over, if they'd been here three days ago, as by rights they ought to have been. I can't give you work, if you are not, more punctual. You needn't think to get along at our tack, unless you plug it in a little faster than all this comes to."

"I'll try and do better after this," said Mrs. Gaston, faintly.

"You'll have to, let me tell you, or we'll cry 'quits.' All my women must have nimble fingers."

"These jackets are not much to brag of," broke in Michael, as he tossed them aside. "I think we had better not trust her with any more cloth roundabouts. She has botched the button-holes awfully; and the jackets are not more than half pressed. Just look how she has held on the back seam of this one, and drawn the edges of the lappels until they set seven ways for Sunday! They're murdered outright, and ought to be hung, with a basin under them to catch the blood."

"What was she to have for them?" asked Berlaps.

"Thirty cents a-piece, I believe," replied the salesman.

"Don't give her but a quarter, then. I'm not going to pay full

price to have my work botched up after that style!" And, so saying, Berlaps turned away and walked back to his desk.

Lizzy Glenn, as she had called herself, entered at the moments and heard the remark of the tailor. She glided noiselessly by Mrs. Gaston, and stood further down the store, with both her body and face turned partly from her, where she waited patiently for the interview between her and Michael to terminate.

The poor, heart-crushed creature did not offer the slightest remonstrance to this act of cruel oppression, but took the half dollar thrown her by Michael for the two jackets with an air of meek resignation. She half turned to go away after doing so, but a thought of her two remaining children caused her to hesitate.

"Have'n't you some more trowsers to give out?" she asked, turning again toward Michael.

The sound of her voice reached the ear of the young female who had just entered, causing her to start, and look for an instant toward the speaker. But she slowly resumed her former position with a sigh, after satisfying herself by a single glance at the woman, whose voice had fallen upon her ear with a strange familiarity.

"We haven't any more ready, ma'am, just now."

"What have you to give out? Any thing?"

"Yes. Here are some unbleached cotton shirts, at seven cents. You can have some of them, if you choose."

"I will take half a dozen," said Mrs. Gaston in a desponding tone. "Any thing is better than nothing."

"Well, Miss Lizzy Glenn," said Michael, with repulsive familiarity, as Mrs. Gaston turned from the counter and left the store, "what can I do for you this morning?"

The young seamstress made no reply, but laid her bundle upon the counter and unrolled it. It contained three fine shirts, with linen bosoms and collars, very neatly made.

"Very well done, Lizzy," said Michael, approvingly, as he inspected the two rows of stitching on the bosoms and other parts of the garments that required to be sewed neatly.

"Have you any more ready?" she asked, shrinking back as she spoke, with a feeling of disgust, from the bold, familiar attendant.

"Have you any more fine shirts for Lizzy Glenn?" called Michael, back to Berlaps, in a loud voice.

"I don't know. How has she made them?"

"First rate."

"Then let her have some more, and pay her for those just brought in."

"That's your sorts!" responded Michael, as he took seventy-five cents from the drawer and threw the money upon the counter. "Good work, good pay, and prompt at that. Will you take three more?"

"I will," was the somewhat haughty and dignified reply, intended to repulse the low-bred fellow's offensive familiarity.

"Highty-tighty!" broke in Michael, in an undertone, meant only for the maiden's ear. "Tip-top airs don't pass for much in these 'ere parts. Do you know that, Miss Lizzy Glenn, or

whatever your name may be? We're all on the same level here. Girls that make slop shirts and trowsers haven't much cause to stand on their dignity. Ha! ha!"

The seamstress turned away quickly, and walked back to the desk where Berlaps stood writing.

"Be kind enough, sir, if you please, to hand me three more of your fine shirts," she said, in a firm, but respectful tone.

Berlaps understood the reason of this application to him, and it caused him to call out to his salesman something after this homely fashion—

"Why, in thunder, Michael, don't you let the girls that come to the store, alone? Give Lizzy three shirts, and be done with your confounded tom-fooleries! The store is no place for them."

The young woman remained quietly beside the desk of Berlaps until Michael came up and handed her the shirts. She then walked quickly toward the door, but did not reach it before Michael, who had glided along behind one of the counters.

"You're a fool! And don't know which side your bread's buttered," he said, with a half leer, half scowl.

She neither paused nor replied, but, stepping quickly out, walked hurriedly away. Young Perkins, before alluded to, entered at the moment, and heard Michael's grossly insulting language.

"Is that the way to talk to a lady, Michael?" he asked, looking at him somewhat sternly.

"But you don't call her a lady, I hope, Mr. Perkins?" the

salesman retorted, seeming, however, a little confused as he spoke.

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.