

Lizzy Glenn Or, The Trials of a Seamstress

Timothy Shay Arthur, 1859

“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!”

Chapter 1.

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 support 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 needs 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 offers 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 sewing 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 1869, 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 large dark mustache, 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 newcomers. But I don't know; you seem to have a simple, honest look. Are you particularly in need of work?”

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

“What kind do you need?”

“Almost anything 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! 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 trousers with pockets, twelve cents; and for finer ones, fifteen and twenty cents. Vests about the same rates.”

“Have you any shirts ready?”

“Yes, plenty. Will you have them 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 would 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 fools to do that, I would 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 works 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 anyone 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 weakened frame the chill air, or to turn off the penetrating rain that came with the wind from the bleak north-east. Her dress, of summer calico, much worn, clung closely to her body. Above all was a small bonnet, and a thick veil, 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 like 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 need 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 need 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 trousers 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 help 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 shall not 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, while she stood with her hands folded across each other, awaiting his pleasure in regard to the *payment* of the meager 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 would 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 anything about it, madam. You know my policy!” 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 more 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 credit, 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 cup of milk and a cup of flour. The children have had nothing to eat since *yesterday*. I took home six pairs of trousers today, which came to ninety cents, at fifteen cents a pair. But I had seven pairs, and Mr. Berlaps will not pay me until I bring the whole number. It will take me till twelve o’clock tonight to finish them, and so I can’t get any money before tomorrow. 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 tomorrow.”

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 bag with flour. These she handed to Mrs. Gaston without uttering a word.

"Tomorrow 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 trousers with pockets in them! Ten cents for shirts and drawers! and everything at that rate. Is it any wonder that they are *starving* — and he growing rich? Curse him, and all like him! I would like to 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 her young bright eyes wishfully upon her mother 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 anything; 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 needs — were so much wasted.

The meal over, Mrs. Gaston took the unfinished pair of trousers, 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 2.

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 trousers, 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 to work 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 work."

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

"A pretty big child, I would 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 needs just such a boy to do odd trifles about, and run of errands. It would be the very dandy for your little fellow. He'll be in here today; 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 anything 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 shall not have any more coarse trousers 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 pants, 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 feelings a good deal. But she felt much worse when Ella, the sick one, half-raised herself from her pillow and 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 around 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 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? — 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 left, 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 fully 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 tonight, woman?” asked the tailor, without lifting his eyes from the employment in which he was engaged.

“I brought home the other pair of trousers this morning, but you were not in,” Mrs. Gaston replied.

“Well?”

“Michael couldn’t pay me, and so I came back 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 have almost forgotten! I want two one-cent candles. I shall have to work late tonight.”

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 upstairs. 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 you 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 doesn’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 spoonfuls; 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 anything today. 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 anything. The orange tasted good, and that is enough for tonight,” 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 nervousness 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 *Henry* out to work, 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 to work 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 3.

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 Mrs. Grubb, 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 Richardson'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 Richardson 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 of suffering* 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 Richardson 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 *everything* to me.”

“Do not allow yourself to indulge needless alarm. I will leave you medicine now, and call again tomorrow. 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 over the fire. 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 exist 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 dull, 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 Richardson, who returned with the boy. He seemed uneasy at the rapid 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 lung 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 coat, 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 always, as Ella moaned, or tossed restlessly upon her pillow, would the mother lay aside 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 reddened 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 Richardson 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 walks 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 Richardson 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 poverty 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 chilling, that he startled, and felt a quiver 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 Doctor Richardson, 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 life 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 gives — and the Lord takes 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 Richardson 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 dead 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 someone who will assist you in your present need,” said Doctor Richardson. Turning away he left the room, and, getting into his carriage, 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 bury 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 4.

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 veil 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 the day before yesterday.”

This caused 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 their weaknesses from me.”

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 anything else, for they went slowly, and after winding about among the labyrinthine streets for ten or twenty minutes, traced 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 veil 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 veil 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 veil was drawn hurriedly down.”

“Strange that she should seek so to hide her face from every eye. Can it be that she is someone 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 would 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 a coach and going over 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 picture 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 did not take away from the instant attraction of her dark hazel eyes, which 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 do you dwell, dear angel? In what dark and undiscovered cave of the ocean rests, in dreamless sleep, your beautiful but unconscious body? Snatched from me in the bloom of youth, when fresh flowers blossomed in your young heart to bless me with their fragrance — how have you left me in loneliness and desolation of spirit! And yet you seems near to me, and, of late, nearer and dearer than ever. Oh, that I could hear your real voice, even if spoken to the ear of my spirit, and see once more your 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 5.

The prompt assistance rendered by Doctor Richardson 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 meager 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 died, 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.

Puttling 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 those 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 do, 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."

"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 jackets. 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 lapels 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 to 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.

"Haven't you some more trousers 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 startle, 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? Anything?"

"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. "Anything 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, over-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 pay!” 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.

“Highly-tighty!” broke in Michael, in an undertone, meant only for the maiden’s ear. “Tip-top airs don’t pass for much in these 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 trousers 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.

“Do you know anything to the contrary?” the young man asked, still looking Michael in the face.

“I can’t say that I know much about her, any way, either good or bad.”

“Then why did you use such language as I heard just now?”

“Oh, well! Never mind, Mr. Perkins,” said Michael, his whole manner changing as a new idea arose in his thoughts; “if she’s your game, I’ll lie low and shut my eyes.”

This bold assurance of the fellow at first confounded Perkins, and then made him very indignant.

“Remember, sir,” said he, in a resolute voice, and with a determined expression on his face, “that I never allow anyone to trifle with me in that style, much less a fellow like you; so govern yourself, hereafter, accordingly. As to this young lady, whom you have just insulted, I give you fair warning now, that another such an act will bring with it merited punishment.”

Perkins then turned from the somewhat crestfallen salesman, and walked back to where Berlaps was standing at his desk.

“Do you know anything about that young woman I just now saw leave here, Mr. Berlaps?” he asked.

“I do not, Mr. Perkins,” was the respectful answer. “She is a stranger, who came in some days ago for work.”

“What is her name?”

“Lizzy Glenn, I believe.”

“Where does she live?”

“Somewhere at the north end. Michael; there, knows.”

“Get from him, her street and number for me, if you please.”

Berlaps asked Michael for the street and number where she lived, which the fellow took good care to give wrongly. Perkins made a memorandum of the name and residence, as furnished, in his note-book, and, bowing to the man, departed.

With her half-dozen shirts at seven cents, Mrs. Gaston returned home, feeling as if she must give up the struggle. The loss of Ella, after having striven so long and so hard for the sake of her children, made her feel more discouraged than she had ever yet felt. It seemed to her as if even Heaven had ceased to regard her — or that she was one doomed to be the sport of cruel and malignant powers. She had been home for only a short time, when Doctor Richardson came in. After inquiring about her health, and if the children were still free from any symptoms of the terrible disease that had carried off their sister, he said —

“I’ve been thinking about you a good deal in the last day or two, Mrs. Gaston, and have now called to have a talk with you. You work for the stores, I believe?”

“Yes, sir.”

“What kind of work do you do?”

“Here are some common shirts, which I have just brought home.”

“Well, how much do you get for them?”

“Seven cents, sir.”

“Seven cents! How many of them can you make in a day?”

“Two are as many as I shall be able to get through with, and attend to my children; and even then I must work half the night. If I had nothing to do but sit down and sew all the while, I might make three of them.”

“Shameful! Shameful! And is that the price paid for such work?”

“It is all I get.”

“At this rate, then, you can only make fourteen cents a day?”

“That is all, sir. And, even on the best of work, I can never get beyond a quarter of a dollar a day.”

“How in the world, then, have you managed to keep yourself and three children from actual poverty?”

“I have not been able, doctor,” she replied, with some bitterness. “We have lacked almost everything.”

“So I would suppose. What rent do you pay for this poor place?”

“Three dollars a month.”

“What! seventy-five cents a week! and not able to earn upon an average more than a dollar a week?”

“Yes, sir. But I had better work through the summer, and sometimes earned two dollars, and even a little more, in a week.”

The doctor paused some time and then said —

“Well, Mrs. Gaston, it’s no use for you to struggle on at this rate, even with your two remaining children. You cannot keep a home for them, and cover their nakedness from the cold. Now let me advise you.”

“I am ready to hear anything, doctor.”

“What I would propose, in the first place — and that, in fact, is what has brought me in this morning — is that you put Henry out to a trade. He is young, it is true; but *necessity*, you know, knows no law. He will be just as well off, and better, too, under the care of a good master, than he can be with you. And, then, such an arrangement will greatly relieve you. The care of little Emma will be light in comparison to what you have had to endure.”

“You are no doubt right, doctor,” the poor woman said, while the tears came to her eyes as she glanced toward Henry, who, for lack of a pair of shoes, was compelled to stay home from school. “But I cannot bear the thought of parting with him. He is a delicate child, and only ten years old this winter. He is too young to go from home and have a master.”

“He is young, I know, Mrs. Gaston. But, then, it is vain to think of being able to keep him with you. It is a *cruel necessity*, I know. But it cannot be avoided.”

“Perhaps not. But, even if I should consent to put him out, I know of no one who would take him. And, above all, I dread the *consequences of wicked associations* in a city like this.”

“That matter, I think, can all be arranged to your satisfaction. I saw a man yesterday from *Lexington, Massachusetts* who asked me if I knew anyone who had a lad ten or twelve-years old, and who would like to get him a good place. I thought of you at once. He said a friend of his there, who carried on a *hating* business, needed a boy. I inquired of his character and standing, and learned that they were good. Now, I think this an excellent chance for you. I have already mentioned your little boy to the man, and promised to speak to you on the subject.”

“But think, doctor,” said Mrs. Gaston, in a trembling voice, “Henry is but ten. To put a child out for eleven years is a long, long time.”

“I know it is, madam. But he has to live the eleven years somewhere, and I am sure he will be as comfortable in this place, as you can make him; and, indeed, even more so.”

“In some respects he may, no doubt. But a child like him is never happy away from his mother.”

“But suppose it is out of his mother’s power to get him food and comfortable clothing?”

“True — true, doctor. It is a hard fate. But I feel that I have only one way before me — that of submission.”

And submit she did, though with a most painful struggle. On the following day, the friend of the hatter called upon Mrs. Gaston, and it was settled between them that little Henry should be called for by the man who was to become his master on the morning of the next day. The best that the mother could do for her son, about to leave his home and go out among strangers, was to get him a pair of shoes, upon which she paid forty cents, promising to settle the balance in a couple of weeks. His thin, scanty clothes she mended and washed clean — darned his old and much-worn stockings, and sewed on the torn front of his seal-skin cap. With his little bundle of clothes tied up, Henry sat awaiting on the morning of the day appointed for the arrival of his master, his young heart sorrowful at the thought of leaving his mother and sister.

But he seemed to feel that he was the subject of a *stern necessity*, and therefore strove to act a manly part, and keep back the tears that were ready to flow forth. Mrs. Gaston, after preparing her boy to pass from under her roof and enter alone upon *life’s hard pilgrimage*, sat down to her work with an overburdened heart. At one moment she would repent of what she had done, and half resolve to say “No,” when the man came for her child. But an unanswerable argument against this were the coarse shirts in her hands, for which she was to receive only seven cents a-piece!

At last a rough voice was heard below, and then a heavy foot upon the stairs, every tread of which seemed to the mother to be upon her heart. Little Henry arose and looked frightened as a man entered, saying as he came in —

“Ah, yes! This is the place, I see. Well, ma’am, is your little boy ready?”

“He is, sir,” replied Mrs. Gaston, almost inaudibly, rising and handing the stranger a chair. “You see he is a very small boy, sir.”

“Yes, so I see. But some small boys are worth a dozen large ones. Come here, my little fellow! What is your name?”

The child went up to the man, telling him his name as he did so.

“That’s a fine little fellow! Well, Henry! do you think you and I can agree? Oh, yes. We’ll get along together very well, I have no doubt. I suppose, ma’am,” he continued, addressing Mrs. Gaston, “that the better way will be for him to stay this winter on *trial*. If we like each other, you can come out to Lexington in the spring and have him regularly bound.”

“That will be as well, I suppose,” the mother replied. Then, after a pause, she said —

“How long will it be, Mr. Sharp, before I can see Henry?”

“I don’t know, ma’am. How long before you think you can come out to Lexington?”

“Indeed, sir, I don’t know that I shall be able to get out there this winter. Couldn’t you send him here sometimes?”

“Perhaps I will, about New Year’s, and let him spend a few days with you.”

“It is a good while to New Year’s day, sir. He has never been from home in his life.”

“Oh no, ma’am. It’s only a few weeks off. And I don’t believe he’ll be homesick for a day.”

“But *I* shall, Mr. Sharp.”

“You?”

“Yes, sir. It is hard to let my child go, and not see him again before New Year’s day.”

“But you must act the *woman*’s part, Mrs. Gaston. We cannot get through life without some *sacrifice* of feeling. My mother had to let me go before I was even as old as your boy.”

As Mr. Sharp said this, he arose, adding as he did so —

“Come, my little man. I see you are all ready.”

Holding back her feelings with a strong effort, Mrs. Gaston took hold of Henry’s small, thin hand, bent over him, and kissed his fair young cheek, murmuring in an undertone —

“God be with you, and keep you, my boy!”

Then, speaking aloud, she said —

“Be a good and obedient child, and Mr. Sharp will be kind to you, and let you come home to see me at New Year.”

“Oh, yes. He shall come home then,” said the man half indifferently, as he moved toward the door.

Henry paused only to kiss his sister, and then followed after, with his little bundle in his hand. As he was about descending the steps, he turned a last look upon his mother. She saw that his eyes were filled with tears. A moment more, and he was gone.

Little Emma had stood looking wonderingly on while this scene was passing. Turning to her mother with a serious face, as the door closed upon Henry, she said —

“Brother gone, mamma?”

“Yes, dear! Brother is gone,” sobbed the mother, taking the last child that remained to her, and hugging it passionately to her bosom. It was a long time before she could resume her work, and then so deep was her feeling of desolation, that she could not keep the blinding tear-drops back from her eyelids.

Chapter 6.

The efforts made by Perkins to find the residence of the stranger proved unavailing. Half suspecting that Michael had deceived him, he returned to the shop of Mr. Berlaps, and asked the direction anew. It was repeated precisely as at first given.

“But I have been there.”

“Well, wasn’t she at that number?”

“No.”

“I don’t know anything about her, then. It often happens that these sewing girls deceive us as to their whereabouts?”

Perkins turned away disappointed, but with his interest in the stranger more than ever excited.

“Who and what can she be? and why do I feel so deep an interest in a perfect stranger, who cannot possibly be anything to me?” were involuntary questions which the young man endeavored, but in vain, to answer.

That night, as he sat alone in his room, his friend Milford came in and found him with the picture before alluded to in his hand.

“Whose sweet face is that? Bless me! But she is a lovely creature!” said Milford, as his eye caught a glimpse of the picture which Perkins made a movement to conceal. “Aha! Mr. Sober-sides! have I found you out at last?”

But seeing that his remarks had the effect to disturb, even agitate his friend, he said, in a changed tone —

“Forgive me if I have thoughtlessly jarred a string that vibrates painfully! I knew not that you carried in your heart, an unhealed wound.”

“And yet I do, my friend. A wound that, I fear, will never heal. Five years have passed since I parted with the living original of this picture. The parting was to be only for a few months. We have never met since, and never will, in this world! The sea gives not up its dead!”

There was a solemn earnestness in the voice of Perkins, that showed how deeply the loss still affected him.

“To me,” said his companion, after a pause, “it seems strange that you should never have alluded to this subject, even to your nearest friend.”

“I could not, Milford. The effort to keep my feelings under control has been severe enough, without permitting myself to speak of the matter at all. But now that it has been alluded to, I feel inclined to talk upon the subject, if you have any desire to hear.”

“I certainly have an anxious desire to hear,” replied Milford.

Perkins shaded his face for a few moments with his hand, and sat silent and thoughtful. He then gave, in a calm voice, the following narration:

“You are aware that, when I came to this city to reside, a few years ago, I moved from Troy, New York. That is my native place — or, at least, I had lived there from boyhood up, when I removed to Boston. It is now about ten years since a man named Ballantine, who seemed to possess considerable wealth, made his appearance in the place, accompanied by his daughter, a young girl about thirteen years of age. He came from New Orleans, where his wife had died, and where he was still engaged in business. His object in coming North with his child was to secure for her the advantages of a good school. He seemed to prefer Troy, and after remaining there for some months concluded to place his child in the family of a newly-married man, whose wife, somewhat matronly in age and in habits, happened to please his fancy, as a maternal guardian for his child. After making every requisite arrangement in regard to her education, he returned to New Orleans, from which city money to defray her expenses was regularly transmitted. Once a year he came North to visit her, and remained in our town for a few weeks.

“I happened to know the family in which *Eugenia* Ballantine was placed, and became acquainted with her immediately. I was then but a boy, though some four years her senior, yet old enough to feel for her, from the beginning, something more than a mere friendly regard. And this sentiment was reciprocal. No place was so pleasant to me, as that which was cheered by her presence — no smile warmed my heart, like her smile; and I could always see her countenance brighten, the moment I came where she was.

“Gradually, as year after year passed, and she still remained among us, our early preference for each other, or rather our early affection, assumed a more serious character. We loved each other; she was just seventeen, and I twenty-one, when I ventured to tell her how deeply, fervently, and purely I loved her. The formal announcement did not seem to create surprise, or agitate her in the least.

“*I never doubted it,*’ was her innocent reply, looking me tenderly in the face.

“And do you love me as truly as I love you, *Eugenia*?” I asked.

“Have you ever doubted it?” was her quiet response to this, also.

“From that moment, I was bewilderingly happy. My family was one of wealth and standing; and I immediately wrote to Mr. Ballantine, who, after sufficient time to make inquiry in regard to the character and position of his daughter’s lover, returned a cordial assent to my proposal for her hand. Thus far everything had gone on as smoothly as a summer sea. We

smiled sometimes together at the carping adage, 'The course of true love never did run smooth,' and referred to our own case as a signal instance of its falsity.

"During the summer following our engagement, Mr. Ballantine did not come on to the North. In the ensuing spring, Eugenia's term of instruction closed at the school, after having been in Troy nearly five years. She was a tall, beautiful woman, with a mind highly cultivated, and externally accomplished in every respect. I was proud of her beauty and acquirements, at the same time that I loved her with fervent devotion. Spring passed away and summer came; with the advancing season her father arrived from the South. He had not seen his child for two years, during which time she had grown up into a mature and lovely woman. I could forgive the jealous pride with which he would look into her face, and the constant tenderness of his allusions to her when she was away from his side.

"I do not think, Mr. Perkins,' he would say to me, sometimes, 'that I can let you have my Eugenia, unless you will go South. I am sure I cannot part with her again.'

"Why not come North, Mr. Ballantine?' I would suggest.

"But he would shake his head as he made some disparaging remark in regard to the North, and playfully insist that I must go with him to the sunny South. It was about the first of September that I asked that our marriage might take place at an early day. But the father shook his head.

"Be content that the flower is to be yours. Do not become too eager to pluck it from its parent stem, I must have my dear girl with me for at least one winter. In the *spring* she shall be yours.'

"Oh, no! Mr. Ballantine,' I said in alarm. 'You are not going to rob me of her for so long a time?' I spoke with warmth.

"Rob you of her!' ejaculated the father, in seeming half indignation. 'You are unreasonable and very selfish, my dear boy! Here you have had her for five years, and after a little while are to have her for life — and yet are unwilling to give me even the blessing of a few short months with my own child. You are not generous!'

"I felt the rebuke, and confessed that I had been moved by too selfish feelings.

"If you think the time long,' he added, 'all you have to do is to come south — we shall welcome you with joy.'

"That I shall no doubt be compelled to do, for I will not be able to exist for five or six long months away from Eugenia.'

"So I would suppose. Well, come along; and after I get you there, I will see if I can't inoculate you with a love of southern people, southern habits, and southern manners. I am expectant that you will like us.'

"Well, perhaps so,' I said. 'But we will see.'

"The time for the departure of Mr. Ballantine and his daughter was set for the first of October. The few remaining days passed on fleet wings, and then, after completing the necessary arrangements, Eugenia left Troy with her father for New York, thence to go by sea to her native city. I accompanied them down the river, and spent two days with them in the city, previous to the sailing of the ship *Empress*, in which they were to embark. Our parting was tender, yet full of hope for a speedy meeting. I had already made up my mind to visit New Orleans about January, and remain there during the winter. Our marriage was then to be solemnized.

"After the sailing of the *Empress*, I returned to Troy, to await the news of her safe arrival at New Orleans. I felt gloomy and desolate, and for my uncompanionable mood, received sundry playful jibes or open-rebukes from my friends. In about a week, I began to examine the shipping lists of the New York papers, in the hope of seeing some notice of the good ship that contained my heart's best treasure. But no record of her having been spoken at sea met my eyes as I scanned the newspapers day after day with an eager and increasing hope, until four, five, and six weeks had passed away. So much troubled had I now become, that I went down to New York to see the owners of the ship.

"Has the *Empress* arrived there yet?' I asked, on entering the counting-room.

"Not at the latest dates,' was the reply, made in a voice expressive of concern.

"Is not her passage a very long one?'

"We should have had news of her arrival ten days ago.'

"Has she been heard from on her voyage?'

"Never but once, and that after she was three days out.'

"Is she a good ship?' I next inquired.

"None better out of this port,' was the prompt answer.

"For ten days I remained in New York, eagerly examining each morning the shipping lists, and referring to all the southern papers to which I could get access. I met during that time, but one reference to the *Empress*, and that was contained in a paragraph alluding to her long passage, and expressing great fears for her safety. This chilled my heart with a more palpable and terrible fear. But why prolong this painful narration by attempting to describe my feelings, as day after day, week after week, and month after month passed, and no *tidings* came of the missing ship? From the day I parted with Eugenia, I have neither seen her nor heard from her. The noble vessel that bore her proudly away, neither reached her destination, nor returned back with her precious freight. All — all found a grave in the dark depths of the ocean.

“It is a terrible thing, my friend, to be thus bereft of all you hold dearest in life. If I had seen her touched by the hand of disease, and watched the rose fading from her cheek, leaf after leaf falling away, until death claimed at last his victim — I could have borne the severe affliction with some degree of fortitude. Even if she had been struck down suddenly at my side, there would have been something for the bruised heart to rest upon. But to be taken from me thus! Her fate shrouded in a most fearful mystery! Oh! it is terrible!”

And the young man set his teeth firmly, and clenched his hands, in a powerful struggle with his still overmastering feelings. At length he resumed, a calmer voice —

“No matter what terrors or violence attended her death — no matter how deep she lies in the unfathomable sea, her spirit is with the blessed angels, for she was a pure and good Christian. This ought to be enough for me. The agonies of a fearful departure are long since over. And why should I recall them, and break up afresh the tender wounds that bleed at the slightest touch? Henceforth I will strive to look away from the past, and onward, in pleasing hope, to that future time when we shall meet where there will be no more parting.”

“She must have been a lovely creature indeed,” said Milford, some minutes after his friend had ceased, holding, as he spoke, the picture in his hand, and looking at it attentively.

“She was as lovely as innocence itself,” was the half abstracted reply.

“Although I never saw her, yet there is an expression in her face that is familiar” — Milford went on to say — “very familiar; but it awakens, I cannot tell why, a feeling of pain. This face is a happy face; and yet it seems every moment as if it would change into a look of sadness — yes, of deep sorrow and suffering.”

“This may arise, and no doubt does, from the *melancholy history* connected with her, that I have just related.”

“Perhaps that is the reason,” Milford returned, thoughtfully. “And yet I know not how to account for the strangely familiar expression of her face.”

“Did you ever see a picture in your life, which had not in it some feature that was familiar?” asked Perkins.

“Perhaps not,” the friend replied, and then sat in mental abstraction for some moments. He was not satisfied with this explanation, and was searching his memory for the original of that peculiar expression which had struck him so forcibly. He was sure that it did exist, and that he had looked upon it no very long time before. But he tried in vain to fix it. The impression floated still in his mind only as a vague idea.

“There! I have it!” he at length exclaimed, but with something of disappointment in his tones. “I remember that the *young seamstress* we were speaking of a few days ago, a single glimpse of whose face I obtained, had that very look which strikes me as familiar in this picture. I thought I had seen it somewhere else.”

Perkins startled, and looked surprised and agitated. But this was only momentary.

“Now that you speak of her,” he said, calmly, “I remember that I always thought of *Eugenia* when I saw her, which is no doubt the reason why I have felt strongly interested for the young stranger, who has doubtless seen better days. I related to you, I believe, the adventure I had near the bridge, in which she was concerned?”

“You did. I wonder what in the world takes her over to Charlestown so often? She goes, I believe, almost every day, and usually late in the afternoon. Several people have spoken of her to me; but none seemed to know her errand there, or to have any knowledge of her whatever.”

“There is some *mystery* connected with her, certainly. This afternoon I went in to make some inquiries in regard to her of Berlaps. I was just in time to hear Michael, his salesman, give her some insulting language, for which I rebuked the fellow sharply.”

“Indeed! How did she take it?” said Milford.

“She did not seem to notice him, but glided quickly past him, as he bent over the counter toward her, and left the store.”

“Did you see her face?”

“No. Her veil was closely drawn, as usual,” answered Perkins.

“I don’t know why it is, but there is something about this young female which interests me very much. Have you yet learned her name?”

“It is *Lizzy Glenn* — so I was told at the clothing store for which she works.”

“Lizzy Glenn! An assumed name, in all probability.”

“Very likely. It sounds as if it might be,” said Perkins.

“If I were you,” remarked the friend, “I would learn something certain about this stranger; if for no other reason, on account of the singular association of her, in your involuntary thought, with Miss Ballantine. She may be a relative; and, if so, it would afford a melancholy pleasure to relieve her from her present unhappy condition, for the sake of the one in Heaven.”

“I have already tried to find her; but she was not at the number where Michael said she resided.”

“She may not have given him the right direction,” said Milford.

“So he pretends to infer. But I would rather believe that Michael has purposely deceived me, than that she would be guilty of falsehood.”

“If I see her again,” said Milford, “I will endeavor, by all means, to discover her place of residence.”

“Do, if you would oblige me. It is my purpose not to lose sight of her at our next meeting, be it where it may. Our present conversation has awakened a deeper interest, and stimulated a more active curiosity. I am no blind believer in *chance*, Milford. I do not regard this meeting with the stranger as something only *fortuitous*. There is a *Providence* in all the events of life, and I am now firmly assured that these encounters with the seamstress are not merely accidental, as the world regards accidents, but events in a chain of circumstances that, when complete, will result in positive good. Of the nature of that good — as to who will be blessed or benefitted — I do not pretend to understand. I only feel ready to act my part in the drama of life. I must and will know more about this stranger.”

Chapter 7.

As little Henry, after parting with his mother, hurried on by the side of Mr. Sharp, who took his way directly across the bridge leading over to Charlestown, where he had left the carriage in which he had ridden from Lexington — a handsome carriage, containing a mother and three happy children, about the age of himself, Emma, and the sister who had just died — drove rapidly by. The children were full of spirits, and, in their thoughtless glee, called out gayly, but with words of ridicule, to the poor, poorly-clad child, who was hurrying on at almost a run beside the man who had become his master. Their words, however, were heeded not by the full-hearted boy. His thoughts were going back to his home, and to his much-loved mother.

This incident is mentioned here, as a striking illustration of the practical working of that system of *grinding the poor*, especially poor females, by which many men make fortunes, or at least acquire far more than a simple competence for life. That carriage belonged to *Berlaps*, and those happy children were his. But how could he buy a carriage and horses, and build fine houses — and yet not be able to pay more than the meager *pittance* for his work that the reader has seen doled out to his half-starving work women? How could his children be fed and clothed sumptuously every day — and the widow, who worked for him from early dawn until the silent watches of midnight, not be able to get wholesome bread and warm garments for her little ones — unless he took more than his just share of the profits upon his goods? If he could only afford to pay seven cents for coarse shirts, and so on, in proportion, up through the entire list of articles made — then how is it that the profits on these very articles enabled him to live in elegance, build fine houses, and keep his own carriage and horses?

Such questions apply not alone to the single instance of *Berlaps*, here introduced. They are pertinent in their application to all who add to their profits for the purpose of a grand income, at the expense of reducing the pay, even a few cents, upon the hard-toiling work woman, whose slender income, at best, is barely sufficient to procure the *absolute necessities* of life. This cutting down of women's wages, until they are reduced to an incompetent pittance, is a system of oppression too extensive, alas! in this, as well as many other countries. It is one of the quiet and legal means by which the strong oppress the weak — by which the selfish build themselves up, cruelly indifferent to the sufferings of those who are robbed of a just compensation for their labor.

The record of a conversation overheard between two of the class alluded to will illustrate this matter. They were tailors — or, rather, what are sometimes called slop-shop, or clothing men. Let it not be supposed that tailors alone are the oppressors of work women. In most of the employments at which females engage, especially such as admit of a competition in labor, advantage is taken of the eager demand for work, and prices reduced to the lowest possible standard. In the eager scramble for monopolizing more than a just share of income, or to increase the amount of sales by the temptation of extremely moderate rates, the prices of goods are put down to the lowest scale they will bear. If, in doing this, the dealer was content with a profit reduced in some proportion to the increase of his sales, no one would have a right to complain. He would be free to sell his goods at cost, or even below cost, if that suited his fancy. Instead of this, however, the profits on his articles are often the same that they were when prices were ten or fifteen per cent higher, and he reaps the advantage of a greatly increased sale, consequent upon the more moderate rates at which he can sell. The evil lies in his cutting down his employees' wages; while they make no party to his voluntary reduction of prices, the precise amount that he throws in to his customer as a temptation to buy more freely. But to the promised dialogue —

“Money don't come in hand-over-fist, as it ought to come,” remarked Grasp, of the flourishing firm of Grasp & Co., Merchant Tailors, of Boston, to the junior partner of the establishment. “The nimble sixpence is better than the slow shilling, you know. We must make our shears eat up cloth a little faster, or we shall not clear five thousand dollars this year.”

“Although that would be a pretty decent business these times.”

“I don't call any business a decent one that can be bettered,” replied Grasp, contemptuously.

“But can ours be bettered?”

“Certainly!”

“How?”

“By selling more goods.”

“How are we to do that?”

“By putting down the prices, and then making a confounded noise about it. Do you understand?”

“I do. But our prices are very low now.”

“True. But we may reduce them still further, and, by so doing, increase our sales to an extent that will make our business net us beyond the present income quite handsomely. But, to do this, we must cut down the prices now paid for *making* up our clothes. In this way, we shall be able to greatly increase our sales, with but a slight reduction upon our present rates of profit.”

“But will our workmen stand it? Our needlewomen, particularly, work very low now.”

“They’ll have to stand it!” replied Grasp; “most of them are glad to get work at any price. Women, with half a dozen hungry mouths around them, don’t stand long to haggle about a few cents in a garment, when there are so many willing to step in and take their places. Besides, what are three or four cents to them on a vest, or pair of pants, or jacket? The difference in a week is small and will not be missed — or, at the worst, will only require them to economize with a little steadier hand; while upon the thousands of garments we sell here, and send away to other markets, it will make a most important aggregate on the right side of profit and loss.”

“There is no doubt of that,” replied the partner, the idea of the aggregate of three or four cents on each garment occupying his mind, and obscuring completely, for a time, every other idea. “Well, I’m with you,” he said, after a little while, “in any scheme for increasing profits. Getting along at the rate of only some two or three thousand a year is rather slow work. Why, there’s Tights, Screw, & Co. — see how they’re cutting into the trade, and carrying everything before them. Tights told me that they cleared twenty thousand dollars last year.”

“No doubt of it. And I’ll make our house do the same before three years roll over, or I’m no prophet.”

“If we are going to play this cutting-down game, we had better begin at once.”

“Oh, certainly. The sooner the better. But first, we must arrange a reduced scale of prices, and then bring our whole tribe of work women and others down to it at once. It will not do to hold any parley with them. If we do, our ears will be dinned to death with trumped-up tales of poverty and distress, and all that sort of thing, with which we have no kind of concern in the world. These are matters personal to these individuals themselves, and have nothing to do with our business. No matter what prices we paid, we would have nothing but grumbling and complaint, if we allowed an open door on that subject.”

“Yes, there is no doubt of that. But, to tell the truth, it is a mystery to me how some of these women get along. Very few make over two dollars a week, and some never go beyond a dollar. Many of them are mothers, and most of them have some one or more dependent upon them. Food, rent, clothes, and fuel, all have to come out of these small earnings. By what hocus-pocus it is done, I must confess, puzzles me to determine.”

“Oh, as to that,” returned Grasp, “it is, no doubt, managed well enough. Provisions, and everything that poor people stand in need of, are very cheap. The actual *necessaries* of life cost but little, you know. How far above the condition of the starving Irish, or the poor operatives in the manufacturing portions of England, is that of the people who work for us! Think of that for a moment.”

“True — very true,” replied the partner. “Well,” he continued, “I think we had better put the screws on to our work women and journeymen at once. I am tired of plodding on at this low rate.”

“So am I. Tonight, then, after we close the store, we will arrange our new bill of prices, and next week bring all hands down to it.”

And they were just as good as their word. And it happened just as they said — the poor work-women had to submit.

But we must return from our digression.

The child who, under the practical operation of a system of which the above dialogue gives some faint idea, had to go out from his home at the tender age of ten years, because his mother, with all her hard toil, early and late, at the prices she obtained for her labor — could not earn enough to provide a sufficiency of food and clothes for her children — that child passed on, unheeding, and, indeed, unhearing the jibes of the happier children of his mother’s oppressor; and endeavored, as sad and sorrowful as he felt, to nerve himself with something of a manly feeling. At Charlestown, Mr. Sharp got into his carriage, and, with the lad he had taken to raise, drove home.

“Well, here is the youngster, Mrs. Sharp,” he said, on alighting from his vehicle. “He is rather smaller and punier than I like, but I have no doubt that he will prove willing and obedient.”

“What is his name?” asked Mrs. Sharp, who had a sharp chin, sharp nose, and sharp features throughout; and, with all, rather a sharp voice. She had no children of her own — those tender pledges being denied her, perhaps on account of the peculiar sharpness of her temper.

“His name is Henry,” replied her husband.

“Henry what?”

“Henry Gaston, I believe. Isn’t that it, my boy?”

Henry replied in the affirmative. Mr. Sharp then said —

“You can go in with Mrs. Sharp, Henry. She will tell you what she wants you to do.”

“Yes, come along.” And Mrs. Sharp turned away as she spoke, and retired into the more interior portion of the house, followed by the boy.

“Mrs. Sharp will tell you what she wants you to do?” Yes, that tells the story. From this hour the child is to become the *drudge* — the hewer of wood and drawer of water — for an unfeeling woman, whose avarice and that of her husband have prompted them to get a little boy as a matter of saving — one who could do the errands for the shop and the drudgery for the house. There was no thought for, and regard toward the child to be exercised. He was to be to them only an *economical little machine*, very useful, though somewhat troublesome at times.

“I don’t see that your mother has killed you with clothes,” said Mrs. Sharp to him, after taking his bundle and examining it, and then surveying him from head to foot. “But I suppose she thinks they will do well enough; and I suppose they will. There, do you see that wooden pail there? Well, I want you to take it and go to the pump across the street, down in the next square, and bring it full of water.”

Henry took the pail, as directed, and went and got the water. This was the beginning of his service, and was all well enough, as far as it went. But from that time he had few moments of relaxation, except what the night gave him, or the quiet Sabbath. All through the first day he was kept busy either in the house or shop, and, before night, had received two or three reprimands from Mrs. Sharp, administered in no very affectionate tones.

When night came, at last — it had seemed a very long day to him — and as he was sent to bed alone, in the dark, he put off his clothes and laid himself down, unable, as he did so, to restrain the tears and sobs. Poor child! How sadly and yearningly did his heart go back to the narrow apartment, every nook and corner of which were dear to him, because his mother’s presence made all sunshine there! And how earnestly did he long to be with her again! But he soon sank away to sleep, from which he did not awaken until the half angry voice of Mrs. Sharp chided him loudly for “lazing it away” in bed until after sunrise. Quickly getting up and dressing himself, he went down and commenced upon a new day of toil.

First he had to bring in wood, then to grind the coffee, afterward to bring water from the pump, and then to scour the knives for breakfast. When these were done, he was sent into the shop to see if Mr. Sharp wanted him, where he found plenty to occupy his attention. The shop was to be cleaned and swept out, the counter to be dusted, and various other little matters to be attended to, which occupied him until breakfast time. After he had finished this meal, Mrs. Sharp managed to find him plenty to do for some hours, and then her husband laid out work for him, at which he devoted himself all the rest of the day, except when he was needed in the kitchen for some purpose or other. And so it continued, day after day, from morning until night. Not an hour’s relaxation was allowed the child; and if, from weariness or disheartened feeling, he sometimes lingered over a piece of work — a severe scolding or some punishment from Mrs. Sharp was sure to follow!

Thus things went on, every day adding to the cold of a rapidly advancing northern winter. But Mrs. Sharp still thought, according to her first conclusions in regard to Henry’s clothes, that “they would do.” They were not very warm, it is true — that she could not help admitting. “But then he is used to wearing thinner clothes than other children,” she reasoned, “or else his mother would have put warmer ones on him. And, anyhow, I see no use in letting him come right down as an *expense* upon our hands. He hasn’t earned his salt yet, much less a winter suit of clothes.”

But the poor little fellow was no more used to bearing exposure to the chilling winds of winter, than she had been when a child. He therefore shrank shiveringly in the penetrating air whenever forced to go beyond the door. This did not fail to meet the eye of Mrs. Sharp — indeed, her eye was rarely off of him when he was within the circle of its vision — and it always *irritated* her. And why? It reproved her for not providing warmer clothes for the child; and hurt her penurious spirit with the too palpable conviction, that before many weeks had passed, they would be compelled to lay out some money for “*the brat*,” as she had begun frequently to designate him to her husband, especially when she felt called upon to complain of him for idleness, carelessness, dullness, stupidity, wastefulness, uncleanliness, hoggishness, or some other one of the *score of faults* she found in a child of ten years old, whom she put down to work as steadily as a grown person.

A single month made a great change in his external appearance; such a change as would have made him unfamiliar even to his mother’s eye. While under her care, his clothes, though poor, had always been whole and clean — his skin well washed, and his hair combed smoothly. Now, the color of his thin jacket and trousers could scarcely have been told for the dust and grease which had become imbedded in their texture. His skin was begrimed until it was many shades darker, and his hair stood stiffly about his head, in matted portions, looking as if a comb had not touched it for weeks. One would hardly have imagined that so great a change could have passed upon a boy in a few weeks as had passed over him. When he left his mother’s humble abode, there was something about him that instantly attracted the eye of almost anyone who looked at him attentively, and won for him favorable impressions. His skin was pure and white, and his mild blue eyes, with their expression of innocent confidence, looked everyone in the face openly. Now there was something *repulsive* to almost everyone about the *dirty boy*, who went moping about with soiled face and hands, a cowed look, and shrinking gait. Scarcely anyone seemed to feel a particle of sympathy for him, either in or out of the house where he dwelt.

Time passed on, and New Year’s day rapidly approached, the anxiously longed-for time, to which Henry had never ceased to look forward since he left his mother’s presence. Every passing day seemed to render his condition more and more uncomfortable. The air grew colder and colder, and the snow lay all around to the depth of many inches. A suit of cloth clothes had been “cooked up” for him out of an old coat and trousers that had long since been worn threadbare by Mr. Sharp. Thin though they were, they yet afforded a most comfortable substitute for those which their welcome appearance had caused him to throw aside. But the pair of *shoes* he had worn when he left Boston were still considered *good enough*, if thought of at all, notwithstanding they gaped largely at the toes, and had been worn so thin in the soles that scarcely the thickness of a knife-blade lay between his feet and the snow-covered ground.

In regard to sleeping, he was not much better off. His bed was of *straw*, upon the *floor*, in a large unplastered garret, and but scantily supplied with covering. Here he would creep away alone in the dark every night, on being driven away to bed from crouching beside the warm kitchen fire after his daily toil was done, and get under the thin covering with all his clothes on. There he would lie, all drawn up into a heap to keep warm, and think of his mother, and long for New Year's day to come, until sleep would lock up his senses in unconsciousness.

At last it was New Year's eve, but the poor child had heard no word about going home. He could sleep but little through that night for thinking about the promised return to his mother on the next day, and for the dread he felt lest Mr. Sharp had forgotten, or would disregard his promise. The bright morning of another new year at length arose, clear and piercingly cold, and Henry crept early from his bed, and went downstairs to make the fires as usual. When Mr. Sharp at length made his appearance, he looked wishfully and inquiringly into his face, but no notice whatever was taken of him, except to give him some order, in the usual short, rough tone in which he always addressed him.

"Ain't I going home to see my mother today, sir?" was on his tongue, but he feared to utter it.

After breakfast, he watched every movement of Mr. Sharp, expecting each moment to see him go out and get the carriage ready to take him to Boston. But no such idea was in the mind of the thoughtless, unfeeling master. Nine, ten, and eleven o'clock came and went, and the poor child's anxious heart began to fail him. Several times he was on the point of recalling to the mind of Mr. Sharp — his promise to his mother that he would be sent home at New Year's, but as often his timid heart caused him to shrink back. At last dinner-time came, and yet nothing was said, nor were there any indications that the boy was to go home. The meal passed, and then Henry was directed to go on some errand about a mile away.

"But ain't I going home today, Mr. Sharp?" said he, with a sudden, despairing resolution, looking up with tearful eyes, as he spoke.

"What's that?" eagerly asked Mrs. Sharp, coming forward. "What's that, ha?"

The frightened boy slunk back, and stood with his eyes upon the floor.

"Go where, did he say, Mr. Sharp?"

"Go to see his mammy, to be sure!" replied the latter, in a half-sneering tone of surprise.

"His mammy, indeed! And pray what put that into his head, I would like to know?"

"Mr. Sharp told mother he would send me home to see her on New Year's day," the child ventured to say in explanation.

"Clear out! Off with you!" exclaimed Mr. Sharp, in an angry voice, half raising his hand to strike the lad. "How dare you!"

Henry started back trembling, at once conscious that all hope of seeing his mother for many long and weary days of suffering and privation, was at an end. Slowly he left the house, shrinking in the cold blast, and went on his errand through the hard frozen snow.

"Did anyone ever hear such impudence!" ejaculated Mrs. Sharp, in breathless surprise. "Sent home on New Year's day to his mammy! A pretty how-do-you-do, upon my word! the dirty little ill-mannered brat!"

"I believe, now I come to think of it," said Sharp, "that I did say something of the kind to his mother, just to pacify her, though I had no thought of doing it; and, indeed, I don't suppose she cares any great deal about seeing him. She didn't look as if she could keep soul and body together long."

"If she wanted to see him so dreadful bad, why didn't she keep him at home with her tied all the while to her apron string?" said the unfeeling woman.

"She would have had to work a little harder to have done that. No doubt she was glad enough to get rid of the burden of supporting him."

"Well, all that I can say is, that any mother who is not willing to work to take care of her children, don't deserve to see them!"

"So say I," returned the husband.

"And as to Henry's going home, I wouldn't hear to any such thing. He'd trump up any kind of stories about not being treated well, so as to prevail upon her not to let him come back. I know just how boys like him talk when they get a chance to run home. Even when they do come back, they're never worth a cent afterward."

"Oh, no! As to his going home, that is out of the question this winter," replied Sharp. "If his mother cares about seeing him — she'll find her way out here."

With a sadder heart than ever, did poor Henry grope his way up into the cold garret that night, with but one thought and one image in his mind, the thought of home and the image of his mother. He dreamed of her all night. He was at home. Her tender voice was in his ear, and his head rested on her bosom. She clothed him in warmer garments, and set him beside her at the table, upon which was tempting food. But morning came at last, and he was awakened from *visions of delight* to a more painful consciousness of his miserable condition by the sharp, chiding voice of his cruel mistress. Slowly, with stiffened limbs and a reluctant heart did he arise, and enter upon the repulsive and hard duties of another day.

As he had not been permitted to go home, his next consolatory thought was that his mother would come out at once to see him. This hope he clung to day after day, but he clung to it in vain. It mattered not that, every time the shop-door opened when he was in it, he turned with a quickened pulse to see if it were not his mother, or that he would pause and listen, when back in the house, to hear if the strange voice that came suddenly from the shop, were not the voice of her he so longed to see. She came not; nor was any word from her brought to him.

And thus passed the whole of the severe month of January, the long and cold winter adding greatly to his other causes of suffering.

Chapter 8.

A boy of more robust constitution and fuller of blood than Henry Gaston, with that activity which a fine flow of animal spirits and a high degree of health give, would have cared little for the exposure to which he was subjected at Sharp's, even if clad no more comfortably. But Henry had little of that healthy warmth natural to the young. He was constitutionally delicate, and this caused him to feel more keenly the chilling intensity of the cold to which he was frequently exposed without sufficient clothing. His whole dress, intended to protect him from the cold of a remarkably severe and trying winter, was a thin shirt, the remains of one worn for nearly a year; the jacket and trousers, thin and threadbare, that Mrs. Sharp had made for him out of some worn-out garment which her husband had thrown aside, and which were now torn in many places; a pair of dilapidated yarn stockings, with feet like a honey-comb. His shoes, the pair given him by his mother, had been half-soled once, but were again so far gone that his stockings protruded in several places, and yet neither his master nor mistress seemed to take any notice of their condition, and he was afraid to ask for a new pair. When it rained or snowed, or, worse, when it rained with or after the snow, as it had done several times within a week, his shoes were but a poor protection for his feet. The snow and water went through them as through a sieve.

Before the first of February, the poor boy was almost crippled with the *chilblains* (an inflammatory swelling, produced by exposure of the feet or hands to cold, and attended by itching, burning, pain, and sometimes ulceration). Through the day, he hobbled about as best he could, often in great pain; and at night the tender skin of his feet, irritated by the warmth of the bed, would keep him awake for hours with a most intolerable burning and itching.

"Why don't you walk straight? What do you go shuffling along in that kind of style for?" said Sharp to him one day, toward the last of January.

"My feet are so sore," replied Henry, with a look of suffering, blended with patient endurance.

"What's the matter with them, ha?" asked his master glancing down at the miserable apologies for shoes and stockings that but partially protected the child's feet from the snow whenever he stepped beyond the threshold.

"They're *frost-bitten*, sir," said Henry.

"Frost-bitten, ha? Pull off your shoes and stockings, and let me see."

Henry drew off an old shoe, tied on with various appliances of twine and leather strings; and then removed a stocking that, through many gaping holes, revealed the red and shining skin beneath. That little foot was a sight to pain the heart of anyone but a cruel tyrant. The heel, in many places, was of a dark purple, and seemed as if mortification were already begun. And in some places it was cracked open, and exhibited running sores.

"Take off your other shoe and stocking," said Sharp, in authoritative tone.

Henry obeyed, trembling all the while. This foot exhibited nearly the same marks of the progress of the painful disease.

"What have you done for it?" asked Sharp, looking Henry in the face with a scowl.

"Nothing but to put a little candle-grease on it at night before I went to bed," replied the child.

"Come out here with me. I'll doctor you," said his master, turning away and disappearing through the back door. Henry followed as quickly as he could walk on his bare feet, that seemed ready to give way under him at every step. When he got as far as the kitchen, he found Sharp waiting for him in the door.

"Here, jump out into that snow-bank!" said he, pointing to a pile of snow that had been shoveled up only that morning, after a fall through the night, and lay loose and high.

The poor boy looked down at his crippled, and, indeed, bleeding feet, and, as may well be supposed, hesitated to comply with the peremptory order.

"Do you hear, boy!" exclaimed his master, seizing him by the collar, and pushing him out into the yard. Then catching him by one arm, he set him in the center of the snow-bank, his naked feet and legs going down into it some twelve or eighteen inches.

"Now stand there until I tell you to come out!"

The child did not scream, for he had already learned to bear pain without uttering even the natural language of suffering; although the agony he endured for the next minute was terrible. At the end of that time, a motion of the head of his master gave him to understand that the ordeal was over.

"Now take that bucket of cold water, and let him put his feet into it," said he to a little girl they had just taken to raise, and who stood near the kitchen window, her heart almost ready to burst at the *cruelty* inflicted upon the only one in the house with whom she had a single feeling in common.

The girl quickly obeyed, and sat down on the floor beside the bucket of water. She handled tenderly the blood-red feet of the little boy, ever looking up into his face, and noting with tender solicitude, the deep lines of suffering upon his forehead.

"There, that will do," said Sharp, who stood looking on, "and now run upstairs and get a better pair of stockings for Henry."

“What do you want with a better pair of stockings?” said Mrs. Sharp, a few moments after, bustling down into the kitchen.

“Why, I want them for Henry,” replied her husband.

“Want them for Henry!” she exclaimed, in surprise. “Where’s the ones he had on?”

“There are some *old rags* in the shop that he had on; but they won’t do now, with such feet as he’s got.”

“What’s the matter with his feet, I’d like to know,” inquired Mrs. Sharp.

“Why, they’re frost-bitten.”

“Let him put them in snow, then. That’ll cure ‘em. It’s nothing but a little snow-burn, I suppose.”

“It’s something worse than that,” replied Sharp, “and he must have a comfortable pair of stockings. And here, Anna, do you run around to Stogies, and tell him to send me three or four pairs of coarse shoes, about Henry’s size.”

Anna, the little girl, disappeared with alacrity, and Mr. Sharp, turning to his wife, said:

“Henry must have a good, warm pair of stockings — or we shall have him sick on our hands.”

“Well, I’ll find him a pair,” replied Mrs. Sharp, going off upstairs. In the mean time, Henry still sat with his feet in the cold water. But the pain occasioned by the snow was nearly all gone. Mrs. Sharp came down with the stockings, and Anna came in with the shoes at the same moment. On lifting the child’s feet from the water, the redness and inflammation had a good deal subsided. Mrs. Sharp rubbed them with a little sweet oil, and then gave him the stockings to put on. He next tried the shoes; and one pair of them fitted him very well. But his feet were too sore and tender for such hard shoes; and when they were on, and tied up around the ankles, he found that after getting up they hurt him most dreadfully in his attempt to walk. But he hobbled, as best he could, into the shop.

“Throw them dirty things into the street!” were the only words addressed to him by Sharp, who pointed at his wet apologies for shoes and stockings, still lying upon the floor.

Henry did as directed, but every step he took was as if he were treading upon coals of fire. His feet, now enveloped in a closely fitting pair of woolen stockings, and galled by the hard and unyielding leather of the new shoes, itched and burned with maddening fervor.

“Here, carry this hat home,” said his master, as he came in from the street, not seeming to notice the expression of suffering that was on his face, nor the evident pain with which he walked.

Henry took the hat and started out. He was but a few paces from the shop, before he found that the shoes rubbed both heels, and pressed upon them at the same time so hard as to produce a painful sensation at each step as if the skin were being torn off. Sometimes he would stop and wait a moment or two, until the intolerable pain subsided, and then he would walk on again with all the fortitude and power of endurance he could command.

In this extreme suffering, the uppermost thought in his mind, when on the street, kept his eyes wandering about, and scanning every female form that came in sight, in the ever-living hope of seeing his *mother*. But the sigh of disappointment told too frequently, that he looked in vain. He had not proceeded far, when the pains in his feet became so acute that he paused, and leaned against a tree, unable for a time to move forward a single step. While resting thus, *Doctor Richardson*, who had been called to visit a patient in Lexington, came past and noticed him. There was something about the child, although so changed that he did not recognize him, that aroused the doctor’s sympathies, and he ordered his man to drive up to the pavement and stop.

“Well, my little man, what’s the matter?” said he, leaning out of his carriage window.

Henry looked up into his face, but did not reply. He knew Doctor Richardson instantly. How strong a hope sprang up in his heart — the hope of hearing from or being taken back to his mother! The kind-hearted physician needed no words to tell him that the little boy was suffering acutely. The flushed face, the startled eye, and the contraction of the brow, were language which he understood as plainly as spoken words.

“What ails you, my little boy!” he said in a voice of tender concern.

The feelings of Henry softened under the warmth of true sympathy expressed in the countenance and tone of Doctor Richardson, and still looking him steadily in the face, essayed, but in vain, to answer the question.

“Are you sick, my boy?” asked the doctor, with real and increasing concern for the poor child.

“My feet hurt me so that I can hardly walk,” replied Henry, whose tongue at last obeyed his efforts to speak.

“And what ails your feet?” asked Doctor Richardson .

“They’ve been frost-bitten, sir.”

“Frost-bitten, indeed! poor child! Well, what have you done for them?”

“Nothing — only I greased them sometimes at night; and today my master made me stand in the snow.”

“*The cruel wretch!*” muttered Doctor Richardson between his teeth. “But can’t you walk up as far as the drug store at the corner, and let me see your feet?” continued the doctor.

“Yes, sir” replied the child, though he felt that to take another step was almost impossible.

“You’ll come right up, will you,” urged the doctor.

“Yes, sir,” returned Henry, in a low voice.

“Then I’ll wait for you. But come along as quickly as you can;” and so saying, the doctor drove off. But he could not help glancing back, after he had gone on about the distance of half a square, for his heart accused him for not having taken the little fellow into his carriage. He soon caught a glimpse of him on the sidewalk, slowly and laboriously endeavoring to work his way along, but evidently with extreme suffering. He at once gave directions to the driver to turn back; and taking Henry into the carriage, hurried on to the office. The child, when lifted in, sank back upon the seat, pale and exhausted. Doctor Richardson asked him no question; and when the carriage stopped, directed the driver to carry him in. He then, with his own hands, carefully removed his shoes and stockings.

“*My poor, poor child!*” said he in pity and astonishment, on beholding the condition of Henry’s feet. The harsh remedy prescribed by Sharp, if the subsequent treatment had been tender and judicious, might have been beneficial; but, after it, to confine the boy’s feet in hard, tight new shoes, and to send him out upon the street, was to induce a high state of inflammation, and, in the advanced state of the chilblains, to endanger mortification. Several of the large ulcerous cracks, which were bleeding freely, the doctor dressed, and then, cutting a number of short strips of adhesive plaster, he applied them to the skin over the heel and foot, in various directions, so as almost completely to cover every portion of the surface.

“How does that feel?” he asked, looking into Henry’s face with an air of relief and satisfaction after he had finished the first foot.

“It feels a good deal better,” replied the child, his voice and the expression of his countenance both indicating that he no longer suffered so excruciatingly as he had but a short time previously.

The other foot was soon dressed in the same way. Doctor Richardson then went back into the house and got a loose pair of stockings and a light pair of shoes, belonging to one of the apothecary’s children, from their mother. These fitted Henry comfortably, and when he stood down upon his feet he did not experience any pain.

“That feels a good deal better, doesn’t it?” said the doctor, smiling.

“Yes, indeed it does,” and Henry looked his *gratitude*; and yet, blended with that look, was an expression that seemed to the doctor an appeal for *protection*.

“You’re afraid to go back now, aren’t you, since you’ve stayed so long?” he asked, in a tone meant to encourage the child’s confidence.

“Indeed I am. Mr. Sharp will be almost sure to *beat* me.”

“What a very *devil incarnate* the man must be!” muttered Doctor Richardson to himself, taking three or four strides across the floor. “I shall have to take the little fellow home, and browbeat his master, I suppose,” he continued. Then addressing Henry, he said, aloud —

“Well, I’ll take you home to him in my carriage, and settle all that for you, my little man; so don’t be frightened.”

Acting upon this resolution, Doctor Richardson soon drove up before the latter’s shop, and, lifting out Henry, led him into the presence of his astonished master.

“What’s the matter now?” asked the latter, roughly, and with a forbidding aspect of countenance.

“The matter is simply this, sir,” responded Doctor Richardson, firmly. “I found this little boy of yours on the street absolutely unable to walk a step further; and on taking him into the drugstore, and examining his feet, I found them in a most shocking condition! Why, sir, in twelve hours mortification would have commenced, when nothing could have saved his life but the *amputation* of both limbs!” The sober earnestness of Doctor Richardson caused Sharp to feel some alarm, and he said —

“I had no idea, doctor, that he was as bad as that.”

“Well, he is, I can assure you, and it is a fortunate thing that I happened to come across him. Why, I haven’t seen so bad a case of chilblains these ten years.”

“What ought I to do for him, doctor?” asked Sharp, in real concern.

“I have done all that is necessary at present,” replied the doctor. “But he must be allowed to have rest; and, as you value his limbs, don’t let him be exposed to the wet or cold until his feet are healed, and the tenderness and soreness are both gone.”

“I shall attend to your direction, most certainly,” said Sharp, his manner greatly changed from what it was when the doctor came in. “But, really, doctor,” he continued, “I had no idea that there was any danger in getting the feet a little frost-bitten.”

“The chilblains are not only extremely painful,” replied Doctor Richardson, “but there is great danger, where the feet are exposed to wet and cold, as Henry’s must have been to get in the condition they are, of mortification. That little boy will require great care, or he will stand a chance of being crippled for life. Good-day!”

Poor Henry! How eagerly had he hung upon the doctor’s words; how almost agonizing had been his desire for even the slightest intimation that he was remembered by the physician, to whose *mistaken* kind offices he was indebted for the place he held in the family of Sharp! But all was in vain. A dozen times he was on the eve of asking for his mother; but, as

often, weak timidity held him back. In the presence of his master, fear kept him silent. It seemed to him as if life would go out when he saw Doctor Richardson turn away from the shop and enter his carriage. A deep darkness fell upon his spirit.

As Doctor Richardson rode off in his carriage, he could not help congratulating himself on the good deed he had performed. Still he did not feel altogether satisfied about the boy. He had been so much concerned for his distressed situation, that he had failed to make any inquiries of him in regard to his friends; and for this he blamed himself, because it was clear that, if the child had friends they ought to know his condition. He blamed himself for this thoughtlessness, and a consciousness of having performed but *half* of his duty to the poor boy caused a shade of *concern* to steal over him, which he could not shake off.

And Henry, as he stood frightened in the shop, felt, as the carriage-wheels rattled away — the hope that had awakened faint and trembling in his heart, sinking into the gloom of despair. One who could have told him of his mother; one who, if he had only taken the courage to have mentioned his name, could have taken tidings of his condition to her, or perhaps would have carried him home — had been beside him for half an hour, and he had not spoken out. And now he was gone. He felt so sick and weak, that he could hardly stand.

From his sad, waking dreams he was roughly startled by the loud, sharp voice of his mistress, who now entered the shop, exclaiming —

“What’s all this? What’s that *little wretch* been doing now, ha?”

“I wish I’d never seen him!” muttered Sharp, but in a tone that left no doubt on the mind of his wife that something more than usually annoying had occurred.

“What’s the matter? What’s he been doing? Not stealing, I hope; though I wouldn’t wonder.”

“He’s sick, and you’ve got to take care of him,” was the dogged answer of Sharp.

“Sick! He looks sick, don’t he?” The tones of the vixen were full of contempt.

Any eye but hers would have seen sickness, sorrow, suffering, and need in the pale, frightened face of the poor boy, as he stood trembling beside the counter, and actually clinging to it for support.

“Who was that in here, just now?” she added.

“Doctor Richardson, of Boston,” replied the hatter, who knew the doctor by sight very well.

“What did he want?”

“He picked Henry up in the street and took him over to the drug store at the corner. Then he brought him home in his carriage. He says that he must be taken care of, or he will become a cripple; that it’s the worst case of chilblains he ever saw; and that his feet are in danger of mortification.”

“I don’t believe a word of it. Here! you go off upstairs,” speaking sharply, and with a threatening look to the child. “I’d like to know what business he has to come here, meddling in affairs that don’t concern him.”

Henry, thus spoken to, let go of the counter, by which he was sustaining himself, and attempted to move toward the door. As he did so, his face grew deathly pale. He staggered across the shop, fell against the wall, and then sank down upon the floor. Mrs. Sharp sprang toward him, not with any humane intention, we are sorry to say; but, before she had grasped the boy’s arm, and given him the purposed jerk, the sight of his ashen, lifeless face prevented the outrage. Exhausted nature could bear nothing more, and protected itself in a temporary suspension of her power. Henry had *fainted*, and it was well that it was so. The fact was a stronger argument in his favor, than any external exhibition of suffering that could have been given.

The hatter and his wife were both alarmed at an event so unexpected by either of them. Henry was quickly removed to a chamber, and every effort made to restore him. It was not a very long time before the machinery of life was again in motion; its action, however, was feeble, as even his oppressors could see. Self-interest, and fear of consequences, if not humanity — prompted more consideration for the boy, and secured for him a few days *respite*. After that, the *oppressed* and his *oppressors* assumed their old relations.

Chapter 9.

“I don’t think I’ve seen anything of Lizzy Glenn for a week,” remarked Berlaps to his man Michael one day during the latter part of December. “Has she anything out?”

“Yes. She has four of our finest shirts.”

“How long since she took them away?”

“It’s over a week — nearly ten days.”

“Indeed! Then she ought to be looked after. It certainly hasn’t taken her all this time to make four shirts.”

“Well, I don’t know. She gets along, somehow, poorly enough,” replied Michael. “She’s often been a whole week making four of them.”

While this conversation was going on, the subject of it entered. She came in with a slow, feeble step, and leaned against the counter as she laid down the bundle of work she had brought with her. Her half-withdrawn veil showed her face to be very pale, and her eyes much sunken. A deep, jarring cough convulsed her frame for a moment or two, causing her to place her hand almost involuntarily upon her bosom, as if she suffered pain there.

“It’s a good while since you took these shirts out, Lizzy,” said Berlaps, in a tone meant to *reprove* her for the slowness with which she worked.

“Yes, it is,” she replied, in a low, sad tone. “I can’t get along very fast. I have a constant pain in my side. And there are other reasons.”

The last sentence was spoken only half aloud, but sufficiently distinct for Berlaps to hear it.

“I don’t expect my work women,” he said sharply, “to have any reasons for not finishing my work in good season, and bringing it in promptly. Ten days to four shirts is unacceptable! You can’t earn your salt at that.”

The young woman made no reply to this, but stood with her eyes drooping to the floor, and her hands leaning hard upon the counter to support herself.

Berlaps then commenced examining the shirts. The result of this examination seemed to soften him a little. No wonder; they were made fully equal to those for which regular shirt-makers receive from seventy-five cents to a dollar a piece.

“Don’t you think you can make five such as these in a week — or even six?” he asked, in a somewhat changed tone.

“I’m afraid not,” was the reply. “There’s a good day’s work on each one of them, and I cannot possibly sit longer than a few hours at a time. And, besides, there are two or three hours of every day that I must attend to other duties.”

“Well, if you can’t, then I suppose you can’t,” said the tailor, in a disappointed, half-offended tone, and turned away from the counter and walked back to his desk, from which he called out to his salesman, after he had stood there for about a minute —

“Pay her for them, Michael, and if you have any more ready, give her another lot.”

Since the sharp rebuke given by Mr. Perkins, Michael had treated Lizzy with less vulgar assurance. Sometimes he would endeavor to sport a light word with her, but she never replied, nor seemed to notice his freedom in the least. This uniform, *dignified reserve*, so different from the demeanor of most of the girls who worked for them, coupled with the manner of Perkins’s interference for her, inspired in his mind a feeling of *respect* for the stranger, which became her protection from his impertinences. On this occasion, he merely asked her how many she would have, and on receiving her answer, handed her the number of shirts she desired.

As she turned to go out, Mrs. Gaston, who had just entered, stood near, with her eyes fixed upon her. She startled as she looked into her face. Indeed, *both* looked surprised, excited, then confused, and let their eyes fall to the floor. They seemed for a moment to have recognized each other, and then to have become instantly conscious that they were nothing but strangers — that such an identification was impossible. An audible sigh escaped Lizzy Glenn, as she passed slowly out and left the store. As she reached the pavement, she turned and looked back at Mrs. Gaston. Their eyes again met for an instant.

“Who is that young woman?” asked Mrs. Gaston.

“Her name is Lizzy Glenn,” replied Michael.

“Do you know anything about her?”

“Nothing — only that she’s a proud, stiff kind of a creature; though what she has to be proud of, is more than I can tell.”

“How long has she been working for you?”

“A couple of months or so, if I recollect rightly.”

“Where does she live?” was Mrs. Gaston’s next question.

“Michael gave her the direction, and then their interactions had entire reference to business.”

After the subject of this brief conversation between Mrs. Gaston and Michael left the store of Mr. Berlaps, she walked slowly in the direction of her temporary home, which was, as has before been mentioned, in an obscure street at the north end. It consisted of a small room, in an old brick house, which had been made by running a rough partition through the

center of the front room in the second story, and then intersecting this partition on one side by another partition, so as to make *three* small rooms out of one large one. These partitions did not reach more than two-thirds of the distance to the ceiling, thus leaving a free circulation of air in the upper and unobstructed portion of the room. As the house stood upon a corner, and contained windows both in front and on the end, each room had a window. The whole were heated by one large stove. For the little room that Lizzy Glenn occupied including fire, she paid seventy-five cents a week. But, as the house was old, the windows open, and the room that had been cut up into smaller ones a large one; and, moreover, as the person who let them and supplied fuel for the stove took good care to see that an undue quantity of this fuel was not burned, she rarely found the temperature of her apartment high enough to be comfortable.

Those who occupied the other two rooms, in each of which, like her own, was a bed, a couple of chairs, and a table, with a small looking-glass — were seamstresses, who were compelled, as she was, to earn a scanty subsistence by working for the slop-shops. But they could work many more hours than she could, and consequently earned more money than she was able to do. Her food — the small portion she consumed — she provided herself, and prepared it at the stove, which was common property.

On returning from the tailor's, as has been seen, she laid her bundle of work upon the bed, and seated herself with a thoughtful air, resting her head upon her hand. The more she thought, the more she seemed disturbed; and finally arose, and commenced walking the floor slowly. Suddenly pausing, at length she sighed heavily, and went to the bed upon which lay her work, took it up, unrolled the bundle, and seating herself by the table, entered once more upon her daily toil.

But her mind was too much disturbed, from some cause, to permit her to pursue her work steadily. In a little while she laid aside the garment upon which she had begun to sew, and, leaning forward, rested her head upon the table, sighing heavily as she did so, and pressing one hand hard against her side, as if to relieve pain.

A tap at the door, aroused her from this state of abstraction. As she turned, the door was quietly opened, and the woman she had seen at the tailor's a short time before, entered. She started to her feet at this unexpected apparition, and gazed, with a look of surprise, inquiry, and hope, upon her visitor.

"*Eugenia!*" exclaimed Mrs. Gaston, springing forward, and instantly the two were locked in each other's arms, and clinging together with convulsive eagerness.

"But no, no! It cannot be my own Eugenia," said Mrs. Gaston, slowly disengaging herself, and holding the young woman from her, while she read over every feature of her pale, thin face. "Surely I am in a strange dream!"

"Yes, I am your own *Eugenia Ballantine!* my more than mother! Or, the *wreck* of her, which a wave of life's ever restless ocean has heaved upon the shore."

"Eugenia Ballantine! How can it be! Lost years ago at *sea*, how can she be in this room, and in this condition! It is impossible! And yet you are, you must be, my own dear Eugenia."

"I am! I am!" sobbed the maiden, leaning her head upon the bosom of Mrs. Gaston, and weeping until tears fell in large drops upon the floor.

"But the sea gives not up its dead," said Mrs. Gaston, in a doubting, bewildered tone.

"True — but the sea never claimed *me* as a victim."

"And your father?"

The maiden's face flushed a moment, while a shade of anguish passed over it.

"At another time, I will tell you all. My mind is now too much agitated and confused. But why do I find you here? And more than all, why as a poor seamstress, toiling for little more than a crust of bread and a cup of water? Where is your husband? Where are your children?"

"Three years ago," replied Mrs. Gaston, "we removed to this city. My husband entered into business, and was unsuccessful. He lost everything, and about a year ago died, leaving me *destitute*. I have struggled on, since then, the best I could, but to little purpose. The pittance I have been able to earn at the miserable prices we are paid by the tailors, has scarcely sufficed to keep my children from starving. But one of them" — and the mother's voice trembled — "my sweet *Ella* was not permitted to remain with me, when I could no longer provide things comfortable for my little ones. A few short weeks ago, she was taken away to a better world. It was a hard trial, but I would not have her back again. And *Henry*, the dear boy, you remember — I have been forced to let him go from my side, out into the world. I have neither seen nor heard from him since I parted with him. *Emma* alone remains."

Mrs. Gaston's feelings so overcame her at this relation, that she wept and sobbed for some time.

"But, my dear Eugenia! — my child that I loved so tenderly, and have so long mourned as lost," she said, at length, drawing her arm affectionately around Miss Ballantine, "in better and happier times, we made one household for more than five pleasant years. Let us not be separated now, when there are clouds over our heads and sorrow on our paths. Together we shall be able to bear up better and longer than when separated. I have a room, into which I moved a week ago, which is pleasanter than this one. One room, one bed, one fire, and one light, will do for two as well as one. We shall be better able to contend with our lot together. Will you come with me, Eugenia?"

“Will I not, Mrs. Gaston? Oh, to be once more with you! To have one who can love me as you will love me! One to whom I can unburden my heart — Oh, I shall be too happy!”

And the poor creature hung upon the neck of her maternal friend, and wept aloud.

“Then come at once,” said Mrs. Gaston. “You have nothing to keep you here?”

“No, nothing,” replied Eugenia.

“I will get someone to take your trunk.” And Mrs. Gaston turned away and left the room. In a little while, she came back with a man, who removed the trunk to her humble dwelling-place. Thence we will follow them.

“And now, my dear Eugenia,” said Mrs. Gaston, after they had become settled down, and their minds had assumed a more even flow, “clear up to me this strange *mystery*. Why are you here, and in this destitute condition? How did you escape death? Tell me all, or I shall still think myself only in the bewildering mazes of a dream!”

Chapter 10.

Without venturing the remotest allusion to her parting with her lover, Miss Ballantine commenced her narrative by saying —

“When I left New York with my father, for New Orleans, no voyage could have promised fairer. Mild, sunny weather, with good breezes and a noble ship, that scarcely seemed to feel the deep swell of the ocean, bore us pleasantly on toward the desired port. But, when only five days out, an awful calamity befell us. One night I was awakened from sleep by a terrific crash; and in a little while the startling cry of *‘The ship’s on fire!’* thrilled upon my ear, and sent an icy shudder to my heart. I arose from my berth, and put on my clothes hastily. By this time my father had come, dreadfully agitated, into the cabin; and while his own lips quivered, and his own voice trembled — he endeavored to quiet my fears, by telling me that there was no danger; that the ship had been struck with lightning; but that the fire occasioned thereby would readily be put out.

“When I ascended to the deck, however, I saw that we had little to hope for. While the masts and rigging were all enveloped in flame, a dense smoke was rising from the hold. Passengers and crew stood looking on with pale, horror-stricken faces. But the captain, a man of self-possession, aroused all from their lethargy by ordering, in a loud, clear voice, the masts and rigging to be cut away instantly. This order was obeyed. Over went, crashing and hissing, three noble masts, with their wealth of canvas, all enveloped in flames, quenching the heaven-enkindled fires in the ocean. Then all was breathless and silent as the grave for some moments, when a broad flash lit up the air, and revealed, for an instant, the dismantled deck upon which we stood, followed by a pealing crash that made the ship tremble. The deep silence that followed was broken by the voice of the captain. His tones were cheerful and confident.

“All will now be well!’ he cried. ‘We are saved from fire, and our good hull will bear us safely up until we meet a passing ship.’

“But there is *fire below*, captain,’ said one.

“It cannot burn without air,’ he replied, in the same tone of confidence. ‘We will keep the hatches closed and sealed; and it must go out.’

“This took a load from my bosom. I saw that what he said was reasonable. But when daylight came, it showed the smoke oozing out through every crevice in the deck. The floors, too, were hot to the feet, and indicated an advanced state of the fire within. All was again terror and confusion, but our captain still remained self-possessed. He saw that every hope of saving the ship was gone; and at once ordered all the life-boats made ready, and well stored with provisions. To the first and second mates, with a portion of the crew, he assigned two of the boats, and in the third and largest he embarked himself with four stout men and the passengers, twelve in all. The sky was still overcast with clouds, and the sea rolled heavily from the effects of the brief but severe storm that had raged in the night. Pushing off from the doomed vessel, we lingered near for a couple of hours to see what her fate would be. At the end of that time, the dense smoke which had nearly hidden her from our view, suddenly became one enveloping mass of flame. It was a beautiful, yet appalling sight, to see that noble vessel thus burning upon the bosom of the sea! For nearly an hour her form, sheeted in fire, stood out distinctly against the face of the sky, and then she went down, and left only a few charred and mutilated fragments afloat upon the surface to tell of her doom.

“During the night that followed, it stormed terribly, and our boat was separated from the other two. We never met again, and for all I have ever learned to the contrary, those who were saved in them from the burning ship — perished from hunger, or were overwhelmed by some eager wave of the ocean.

“The four men of the ship’s crew, with the captain and male passengers, labored alternately at the oars, but with little effect. Heavy seas, and continued stormy weather, rendered of little avail all efforts to make much headway toward any port. Our main hope was that of meeting with some vessel. But this hope mocked us day after day. No ship showed her white sails upon the broad expanse of waters that stretched, far as the eye could reach, in all directions. Thus *ten days* passed, and our provisions and water were nearly exhausted. Three of the passengers had become already very ill, and all of us were more or less sick from exposure to the rain and sea. On the *twelfth* day, two of our number died and were cast overboard. Others became sick, and by the time we had been floating about thus for the space of *twenty* days, only four of the twelve remained. Most of them died with a raging fever. The captain was among the number, and there was now no one to whom we could look with confidence. My father still lived, though he was exceedingly ill. Our companions were now reduced to a young man and his sister.

“A bag of biscuits still remained, and a small portion of water. Of this, none but myself could eat. The rest were too sick. Three days more passed — and I was alone with my father! The brother and his sister died, and with my own hands I had to consign them to their grave in the sea. I need not attempt to give any true idea of my feelings when I found myself thus alone, with my father just on the brink of death, afar in the midst of the ocean. He was unconscious; and I felt that I was on the verge of delirium. A strong fever made the blood rush wildly through my veins, causing my temples to throb as if they would burst. From about this time, consciousness forsook me.

I can recollect little more until I found myself lying in a berth, on board of a strange vessel. I was as feeble as an infant. A man, with the aspect of a foreigner, sat near me. He spoke to me, but in a foreign tongue. I understood, and could speak French, Spanish, and Italian; but I had never studied *German*, and this man was a Hollander. Of course, I understood but a word here and there, and not sufficient to gain any intelligence from what he said, or to make him comprehend me, except when I asked for my father. Then he understood me, and pointing across the cabin, gave me to know that my father was with me in the the ship, though very sick.

“Small portions of nourishing food were now offered at frequent intervals; and, as my appetite came back keenly, and I took the scanty supply that was allowed me, I gradually gained strength. In a week I was able to leave my berth, and to walk, with the assistance of the captain of the vessel, for he it was whom I had first seen on the restoration of consciousness, to the room in which my father lay. Oh! how he had changed! I hardly recognized him. His face had grown long and thin, his eyes were sunken far back in his head, and his hair, that had been scarcely touched with the frosts of age when we left New York, was white! He did not know me, although he looked me feebly in the face. The sound of my voice seemed to rouse him a little, but he only looked at me with a more earnest gaze, and then closed his eyes.

From this time, I was his constant nurse, and was soon blessed with finding him gradually recovering. But as health came back to his body, it was too appallingly visible that his *reason* had been shattered. He soon came to know me, to speak to me, and to caress me, with more than his usual fondness; but his mind was — alas! too evidently — *imbecile*. As this state of mental alienation showed itself more and more distinctly, on his gradually acquiring physical strength, it seemed as if the painful fact would kill me. But we are formed to endure great extremes of bodily and mental anguish. The bow will bend far, before it breaks.

“After I had recovered so as to leave my berth entirely, and when, I suppose, the captain thought it would be safe to question me — he brought a map, and indicated plainly enough that he wished me to point out the country I was from. I laid my hand upon the United States. He looked surprised. I glanced around at the ship, and then pointed to the map with a look of inquiry. He placed his finger near the Cape of Good Hope. It was now my turn to look surprised. By signs I wished him to tell me how we should get back; and he indicated, plainly enough, that he would put us on board of the first vessel he met that was returning either to Europe or the United States, or else would leave us at the Cape of Good Hope. But day after day passed, and we met no returning vessel. Before we reached the Cape, a most terrific storm came on, which continued many days, in which the ship lost two of her masts, and was driven far south. It seemed to me as if my father and I had been doomed to perish in the ocean, and the sea would not, therefore, relinquish its *prey*. It was ten or twelve days before the storm had sufficiently abated to leave the vessel manageable in the hands of the captain and crew, and then the captain’s reckoning was gone. He could get his latitude correctly, but not his longitude, except by a remote approximation.

His first observation, when the sky gave an opportunity, showed us to be in latitude forty-five degrees south. This he explained to me, and also the impracticability of now making the Cape, pointing out upon the map the Swan River Settlement in Australia as the point he would endeavor first to make. A heavy ship, with but one mast, made but slow progress. On the third day another storm overtook us, and we were driven before the gale at a furious rate.

That night our vessel struck a reef, and went to pieces. Six of us escaped, my father among the rest, and the captain, in a boat, and were thrown upon the shore of an *uninhabited island*. In the morning there lay floating in a little protected cove of the island, barrels of provisions, as pork, fish, bread, and flour, with chests, and numerous fragments of the ship, and portions of her cargo. The captain and sailors at once set about securing all that could possibly be rescued from the water, and succeeded in getting provisions and clothing enough to last all of us for many months, if, unfortunately, we should not earlier be relieved from our dreadful situation. My father had become strong enough to go about and take care of himself, but his mind was feebler, and he seemed more like an *old man in his second childhood* than one in the prime of life as he was. He was not troublesome to anyone, nor was there any fear of trusting him by himself. He was only like an *imbecile old man* — and such even the captain thought him.

“A thing which I failed to mention in its place, I might as well allude to here. On recovery from that state of physical exhaustion in which the humane captain of the Dutch East Indiaman had found me, my hand rested accidentally upon the pocket of my father’s coat, which hung up in the room that had been assigned to him. His pocket-book was there. It instantly occurred to me to examine it, and see how much money it contained, for I knew that, unless we had money, before getting back, we would be subjected to inconvenience, annoyance, and great privation; and as my father seemed to be so weak in mind, all the care of providing for our comfort, I saw, would devolve upon me. I instantly removed the pocket-book, which was large. I found a purse in the same pocket, and took that also. With these I retired into my own room, and fastening the door inside, commenced an examination of their contents. The purse contained twenty eagles; and in the compartments of the pocket-book were ten eagles more, making three hundred dollars in gold. In bank bills there were five of one thousand dollars each, ten of one hundred dollars, and about two hundred dollars in smaller amounts, all of New York city banks. These I took and carefully sewed up in one of my under garments, and also did the same with the gold. I mention this, as it bears with importance upon our subsequent history.

“A temporary shelter was erected; a large pole with a white flag fastened to it, as a signal to any passing vessel, was set up; and the captain, with two of his men, set out to explore the island. They were gone for two days. On returning, they reported no inhabitants, but plenty of good game, if any way could be devised to take it. No vessel appearing, after the lapse of some twelve or fifteen days, the men set about building for us a more comfortable place of shelter. One of these men had been a carpenter, and as an axe and saw, and some few tools, had come ashore on pieces of the wreck, and in chests, he was enabled to put up a very comfortable tenement, with a room for me partitioned off from the main room.

“Here we remained for I can scarcely tell how long. It was, I believe, for about a year and a half; during which time, two of the men died, and our party was reduced to four. About this period, when all of us began to feel sick from *hope deferred*, and almost to wish that we might die, a heavy storm came up, with wind from the north-west, and blew heavily for three or four days. On the morning of the fourth day, when the wind had subsided, a vessel, driven out of her course, was seen within a few leagues of the land. Signals were instantly made, and our eyes gladdened by the sight of a boat which was put off from the ship.

In this we soon embarked, and, with a sensation of wild delight, found ourselves once more treading the deck of a good vessel. She was an English merchantman, bound for Cantone. We made a quick passage to that port, where we found a vessel just ready to sail for Liverpool. In this I embarked, with my father, who still remained in the same sad state of mental derangement. No incident, worthy of referring to now, occurred on our passage to Liverpool, whence we embarked for New Orleans, at which place we arrived, after having been absent from our native land for the long space of *nearly three years!* How different were my feelings, my hopes, my heart, on the day I returned to that city eight years from the time I left it as a mirthful child, with the world all new and bright and beautiful before me! I need not draw the contrast. Your own thoughts can do that vividly enough.

“You can scarcely imagine the eagerness with which I looked forward to an arrival in my native city. We had friends there, and a fortune, and I fed my heart with the pleasing hope that skillful physicians would awaken my father’s slumbering reason into renewed and healthy activity. Arrived there at last, we took lodgings at a hotel, where I wrote a brief note to my father’s business partner, in whose hands all the business had been, of course, during our absence, stating a few facts as to our long absence and asking him to attend upon us immediately.

After dispatching this note, I waited in almost breathless expectation, looking every moment to see Mr. Paralette enter. But hour after hour passed, and no one came. Then I sent notes to two or three of my father’s friends, whom I recollected, but met with no response during the day. All this strange indifference was incomprehensible to me. It was, in part, explained to my mind on the next morning, when one of the people to whom I had written called, and was shown up into our parlor by request. There was a coldness and reserve about him, combined with a too evident suspicion that it was not all as I had said. That my father was not Mr. Ballantine, nor I his daughter — but both, in fact, *impostors!* And certain it is that the white-headed imbecile old man bore but little resemblance to the fine, manly, robust form, which my father presented three years before. The visitor questioned and cross-questioned me; and failed not to hint at what seemed to him *discrepancies*, and even impossibilities in my story. I felt indignant at this; at the same time my heart sank at the suddenly flashing conviction that, after all our sufferings and long weary exile from our home — we should find ourselves but strangers in the land of our birth — be even repulsed from our own homestead.

“Our visitor retired after an interview of about half an hour, giving me to understand pretty plainly that he thought both my father and myself impostors. His departure left me faint and sick at heart. But from this state I aroused myself, after a while, and determined to go and see Mr. Paralette at once. A servant called a carriage, and I ordered the driver to take me to the store of Ballantine & Paralette.

“‘There is no such firm now, madam,’ he said; ‘Mr. Ballantine was lost at sea some years ago. It is Paralette & Co. now.’

“‘Drive me there, then,’ I said, in a choking voice.

“In a few minutes the carriage stopped at the place I had designated, and I entered the store formerly kept by my father. Though I had been absent for eight years, yet everything looked familiar, and nothing more familiar than the face of Mr. Paralette, my father’s business partner. I advanced to meet him with a quick step; but his look of unrecognition, and the instant remembrance that he had not attended to my note, and moreover that it had been plainly hinted to me that I was an impostor, made me hesitate, and my whole manner to become confused.

“‘Eugenia Ballantine is my name,’ said I, in a quivering voice. ‘I dropped you a note yesterday, informing you that my father and I had returned to the city.’

“He looked at me a moment with a calm, severe, scrutinizing gaze, and then said —

“‘Yes, I received your note, and have this moment seen Mr. Spencer, who called upon you. And he corroborates the instant suspicion I had that your story could not be correct. He tells me that the man whom you call your father resembles Moses a great deal more than he does the late Mr. Ballantine. So you see, madam, that your story won’t go for anything here.’

“There was something cold and sneering in the tone, manner, and expression of Mr. Paralette that completely broke me down. I saw, in an instant, that my case was hopeless, at least for the time. I was a lone, weak woman, and during an absence of eight years from my native city, I had grown up from a slender child, into a tall woman, and had, from suffering and privation, been greatly changed, and my countenance marred even since I had attained the age of womanhood. Under these circumstances, with my father changed so that no one could recognize him, I felt that to make my strange story believed would be impossible.

From the presence of Mr. Paralette I retired, and went back to the hotel, feeling as if my heart would break. Oh, it was dreadful to be thus repulsed. I tried only twice more to make my story believed; failing in these efforts, I turned all my thoughts toward the restoration of my father to mental health, believing that, when this was done, he, as a man, could resume his own place and his true position. I had over six thousand dollars of the money I had taken from my father’s pocket-book, and which I had always kept so completely concealed about my person, that no one had the least suspicion of it. Five thousand of this I deposited on interest, and with the residue took a small house in the suburbs of the city, which I furnished plainly, and moved into it with my father. I then employed two of the most skillful physicians in the city, and placed him in their hands, studiously concealing from them our real names and history. For eighteen months he was under medical treatment, and for at least six months of that time in a private insane hospital. But all to no effect. Severe or lenient treatment all ended in the same result. He continued a simple, harmless old man, fond of me as a child is of his mother, and looking up to and confiding in me for everything.

“At the end of the period I have indicated, I found my means had become reduced to about three thousand dollars. This awoke in my bosom a new cause of anxiety. If my father should not recover his reason in two or three years, I would have nothing upon which to support him, and be compelled to see him taken to some public institution for the insane, there to be treated without that tenderness and regard which a daughter can exercise toward her parent. This fear haunted me terribly.

“It was near the end of the period I have named, that I met with an account of the Massachusetts Insane Hospital, situated in Charlestown in this State. I was pleased with the manner in which patients were represented to be treated, and found that, by investing in Boston the balance of my little property, the income would be sufficient to pay for my father’s maintenance there. As for myself, I had no fear but that with my needle, or in some other way, I could easily earn enough to supply my own limited needs. A long conference with one of the physicians who had attended my father, raised my hopes greatly as to the benefits which might result from his being placed in an institution so well conducted.

“As soon as this idea had become fully formed in my mind, I sold off all our little stock of furniture, and with the meager supply of clothing to which I had limited myself, ventured once more to try the perils of the sea. After a quick passage, we arrived in Boston. My father, I at once had placed in the asylum, after having invested nearly every dollar I had in bank stock, the dividends from which were guaranteed to the institution for his support, so long as he remained one of its inhabitants.

This was early in the last fall. I had then but a few dollars left, and no income. I was in a strange city, dependent entirely upon my own resources. And what were they? ‘What am I to do? Where am I to go for employment?’ were questions I found hard indeed to answer. Twenty dollars were all I possessed in the world; and this sum, at a hotel, would not last me, I knew, over two or three weeks. I therefore sought out a private boarding-house, where, under an *assumed name*, I got a room and my board for two dollars a week. The woman who kept the boarding-house, and to whom I communicated my wish to get sewing, gave me half a dozen plain shirts to make for her husband, for which I received fifty cents each. This was all the work I obtained during the first two weeks I was in the house, and it yielded me only three dollars, when my boarding cost me four. I felt a good deal discouraged after that. I knew no one to whom I could go for work — and the woman with whom I boarded could not recommend me to any place, except to the clothing-stores. But they, she said, paid so badly that she would not advise me to go there, for I could not earn much over half what it would cost me for my board. Still, she added, ‘half a loaf is better than no bread.’ I felt that there was truth in this last remark, and, therefore, after getting the direction of a clothing-store, I went there and got a few pairs of coarse trousers. This kind of work was new to me. In my ignorance, I made some portion of them wrong, for which I received abuse from the owner of the shop, and no money. He was not going, he said, to pay me for having his work spoiled.

“Dreadfully disheartened, I returned to my lodgings, and set myself to ponder over some other means of support. I had been, while at school, one of the best French and Spanish scholars in the school. I had also given great attention to music, and could have taught it as skillfully as our musical professor. But five years had passed since I touched the keys of a piano or harp, and I had not, during that time, spoken a dozen words in any language except my native tongue. And, even if I had retained all my former skill and proficiency, my appearance was not such as to guarantee me, as a perfect stranger, any favorable reception either from private families or schools. So anxious had I been to make the remnant of my father’s property, which a kind Providence had spared to us, meet our extreme need, that I denied myself everything that I could possibly do without. Having no occasion to go into society, for no one would recognize me as *Eugenia Ballantine*, I had paid little regard to my external appearance, so far as elegant and fashionable apparel was concerned. I bought sparingly,

and chose only plain and cheap articles. My clothes were, therefore, not of a kind, as you may yourself see, to give me, so far as they were concerned, a passport to consideration.

“As two dollars a week would, I knew, in a very short time, exhaust my little stock of money, I determined to try and rent a room somewhere, at the lowest possible rate, and buy my own food. I eat but a little, and felt sure that, by making this arrangement, I could exist on one dollar a week instead of two, and this much it seemed as if I must be able to earn at something or other. On the day after I formed this resolution I met, in my walks about the city for the purpose, with the room where you found me, for which I paid seventy-five cents a week. There I moved, and managed to live on about one dollar and a quarter a week, which sum, or, at the worst, seventy-five cents or a dollar a week, I have since earned at making fine shirts for Mr. Berlaps at twenty-five cents each. I could have done better than that, but every day I visit my father, and this occupies from two to three hours.”

“And how is your father?” asked Mrs. Gaston, wiping her tearful eyes, as Eugenia paused, on ending her narrative.

“He seems calmer, and much more serious and apparently thoughtful since he has been in this institution,” Eugenia replied, with something of cheerfulness in her tone. “He does not greet my coming, as he did at first, with childish pleasure, but looks at me gravely, yet with tenderness, when I enter; and, when I go away, he always asks if I will ‘come again tomorrow.’ He did not do this at first.”

“But have you not written to *Mr. Perkins* since your return?” asked Mrs. Gaston.

Eugenia became instantly pale and agitated. But recovering herself with an effort, she simply replied —

“How could I? To him I had, years before, been lost in the sea. I could not exist in his mind, except as one in the world of spirits. And how did I know, that he has not found another to fill that place in his heart which I once occupied? On this subject I dared make no inquiry. And, even if this were not the case, I am not as I was. I had fortune and social standing when he wooed and won me. Now I am in *indigence*, and branded as an *impostor* in my native city. If none recognized and received us in our own home, how could I expect him to do so? And to have been spurned as a mere pretender by him, would have broken my heart at once.”

Eugenia was greatly moved by this allusion to her former lover and affianced husband. The subject was one upon which she had never allowed herself to think, except compulsorily, and but for a few moments at a time. She could not bear it. After a silence of some moments, Mrs. Gaston said —

“I have not met with or heard of Mr. Perkins for some years. He remained in Troy about six months after you went away, and, during that period, I saw him very frequently. Your loss seemed, for a time, as if it would destroy his reason. I never saw anyone suffer such keen mental distress as he did. The fearful uncertainty that hung around your fate racked his mind with the intensest anguish. At the end of the time I have mentioned, he went to New York, and, I was told, left that city a year afterward; but, whether it is so or not, I never learned. Indeed, I am entirely ignorant as to whether he is now alive or dead. For years I have neither heard of him nor seen him.”

Eugenia wept bitterly when Mrs. Gaston ceased speaking. She did not reply, but sat for a long time with her hand partly concealing her face, her whole body trembling nervously, and the tears falling fast from her eyes. From this excitement and agitation, consequent upon a reference to the past, she gradually recovered; and then Mrs. Gaston related, in turn, her trials and afflictions since their separation so many years before. These we will not now record for the reader, but hurry on to the conclusion of our narrative.

By a union of their efforts, Mrs. Gaston and Eugenia were enabled, though to do so required them to toil with unremitting diligence, to secure more comforts — to say nothing of the mutual strength and consolation they received from each other — than either could have possibly obtained alone. The rent of a room, and the expense of an extra light, were saved, and this was important where every cent had to be laid out with the most thoughtful economy. Eugenia no longer went out, except to visit her father. Mrs. Gaston brought home as much work from the shop as both of them could do, and received the money for it when it was done, which all went into a common fund. Thus the time wore on, Eugenia feeling happier than she had felt for many weary years. Mrs. Gaston had been a mother to her while she lived in Troy, and Eugenia entertained for her a deep affection. Their changed lot, hard and painful though it was — drew them closer together, and united them in a bond of mutual tenderness.

New Year’s day at last came, and the mother, who had looked forward so anxiously for its arrival, that she might see her boy once more, felt happier in the prospect of meeting him, than she had been for a long time. Since his departure, she had not heard a single word from him, which caused her to feel painfully anxious. But this day was to put an end to her mind’s prolonged and painful suspense, in regard to him. From about nine o’clock in the morning, she began to look momentarily for his arrival. But the time slowly wore on, and yet he did not come. Ten, eleven twelve, one o’clock came and went, and the boy was still absent from his mother, whose heart yearned to see his fair face, and to hear his voice, so pleasant to her ear, with unutterable longings. But still the hours went by — two, three, four, and then the dusky twilight began to fall, bringing with it the heart-aching assurance that her boy would not come home.

The tears, which she had restrained all day, now flowed freely, and her over-excited feelings gave way to a gush of bitter grief. The next day came and went, and the next, and the next — but there was no word from Henry. And thus the

days followed each other, until the severe month of January passed away. So anxious and excited did the poor mother now become, that she could remain passive no longer. She must see or hear from her child. Doctor Richardson had obtained him his place, and to him she repaired.

“But haven’t you seen your little boy since he went to Lexington?” the doctor asked, in some surprise.

“Indeed, I have not; and Mr. Sharp promised to bring him home on New Year’s day,” replied the mother.

“Mr. Sharp! Mr. Sharp!” ejaculated the doctor, thoughtfully. “Is that the name of the man who has your son?”

“Yes, sir. That is his name.”

Doctor Richardson arose and took two or three turns across the floor at this, and, then resuming his seat, said —

“You shall see your son *tomorrow*, Mrs. Gaston. I will myself go to Lexington and bring him home. I had no idea that the man had not kept his promise with you. And, as I got Henry the place, I must see that his master is as good as his word in regard to him.”

With this assurance, Mrs. Gaston returned home, and with a lighter heart.

Chapter 11.

One Morning, a few days after the young man named Perkins had related to his friend the history of his attachment to Miss Ballantine and his subsequent bereavement, he opened a letter which came by mail, among several relating to business, postmarked New Orleans. It was from an old friend, who had settled there. Among other matters, was this paragraph:

“I heard something the other day that surprised me a good deal, and, as it relates to a subject in which no one can feel a deeper interest than yourself, I have thought it right to mention it. It is said that, about a year and a half ago, a young woman and her father suddenly made their appearance here, and claimed to be *Mr. and Miss Ballantine*. Their story, or rather the story of the daughter (for the father, it is, said, was out of his mind), was that the ship in which they sailed from New York had been burned at sea, and that a few of the passengers had been saved in a boat, which floated about until all died but herself and father; that they were taken up almost exhausted, by a Dutch East Indiaman, and that this vessel when near the Cape of Good Hope, encountered a gale, and was blown far off south, losing two of her masts; and that she was finally wrecked upon an uninhabited island, and the few saved were compelled to remain there for nearly two years before being discovered and rescued. This story was not believed. Mr. Paralette, it is said, who has retained possession of all Mr. Ballantine’s property since his absence, was waited upon by the young woman; but he repulsed her as an *impostor*, and refused to make the least investigation into her case. He had his own reasons for this, it is also said.

Several of Mr. Ballantine’s old friends received notes from her; but none believed her story, especially as the man she called her father bore little or no resemblance to Mr. Ballantine. But it is now said, by many, that loss of reason and great physical suffering had changed him, as these would change any man. Discouraged, disheartened, and dismayed at the unexpected repulse she met, it is supposed by some, who now begin to half believe the story, that she died in despair. Others say that the same young woman who called upon Mr. Paralette has occasionally been seen here. And it is also said that two of our most eminent physicians were engaged by a young woman, about whom there was to them something singular and inexplicable, for nearly a year and a half to attend her father, who was out of his mind, but that they failed to give him any relief. These things are now causing a good deal of talk here in private circles, and I have thought it best to make you aware of the fact.”

From that time until the coaches left for New York, Perkins was in a state of strong inward excitement. Hurriedly arranging his business for an absence of some weeks, he started for the South late in the afternoon, without communicating to anyone the real cause of his sudden movement. After an anxious journey of nearly two weeks, he arrived in New Orleans, and called immediately upon Mr. Paralette, and stated the rumor he had heard. That gentleman seemed greatly surprised, and even startled at the earnestness of the young man, and more particularly so when he learned precisely the relation in which he stood to the daughter of Mr. Ballantine.

“I remember the fact,” was his reply. “But then, the young woman was, of course, a mere *pretender*.”

“But how do you know?” urged Mr. Perkins. “Did you take any steps to ascertain the truth of her story?”

“Of course not. Why should I? An old friend of her father’s called upon them at the hotel, and saw the man that was attempted to be put off by an artful girl as Mr. Ballantine. But he said the man bore no resemblance to that person. He was old and white-headed. He was senile — a simple old fool — passive in the hands of a designing woman.”

“Did you see him?”

“No.”

“Strange that you should not!” Perkins replied, looking the man steadily in the face. “Bearing the relation that you did to Mr. Ballantine, it might be supposed that you would have been the first to see the man, and the most active to ascertain the truth or falsity of the story.”

“I do not permit anyone to question me in regard to my conduct,” Mr. Paralette said, in an offended tone, turning from the excited young man.

Perkins saw that he had gone too far, and endeavored to modify and apologize: but the merchant repulsed him, and refused to answer any more questions, or to hold any further conversation with him on the subject.

The next step taken by the young man, was to seek out his friend, and learn from him all the particular rumors on the subject, and who would be most likely to put him in the way of tracing the individuals he was in search of. But he found, when he got fairly started on the business for which he had come to New Orleans, that he met with but little encouragement. Some shrugged their shoulders, some smiled in his face, and nearly everyone treated the matter with a degree of indifference. Many had heard that a person *claiming* to be Miss Ballantine had sent notes to a few of Mr. Ballantine’s old friends about two years previous; but no one seemed to have the least doubt of her being an impostor. A week passed in fruitless efforts to awaken any interest, or to create the slightest disposition to inquiry among Mr. Ballantine’s old friends. The story told by the young woman, they considered as too improbable to bear upon its face the least appearance of truth.

“Why,” was the unanswerable argument of many, “has nothing been heard of the matter since? If that girl had really been Miss Ballantine, and that simple old man her father — do you think we would have heard no more on the subject? The *imposition* was immediately detected, and the whole matter quashed at once.”

Failing to create any interest in the minds of those he had supposed would have been most eager to prosecute inquiry, but led on by desperate hope, Perkins had an advertisement inserted in all the city papers, asking the individuals who had presented themselves some eighteen months before as Mr. Ballantine and his daughter, to call upon him at his room in the hotel. A week passed, but no one responded to the call. He then tried to ascertain the names of the *physicians* who, it was said, had attended an old man for imbecility of mind, at the request of a daughter who seemed most deeply devoted to him. In this, he at length proved successful.

“I did attend such a case,” was at last replied to his oft-repeated question.

“Then, my dear sir,” said Perkins, in a deeply excited voice, “tell me where they are.”

“That, my young friend, is, really out of my power,” returned the physician. “It is some time since I visited them.”

“What was their name?” asked the young man.

“Glenn, if I recollect rightly.”

“Glenn! Glenn!” said Perkins, starting, and then pausing to think. “Was the daughter a tall, pale, slender girl, with light brown hair?”

“She was. And though living in the greatest seclusion, was a woman of refinement and education.”

“You can direct me, of course, to the house where they live?”

“I can. But you will not, I presume, find them there. The daughter, when I last saw her, said that she had resolved on taking her father on to Boston, in order to try the effects of the discipline of the *Massachusetts Insane Hospital* upon him, of which she had seen a very favorable report. I encouraged her to go, and my impression is that she is already at the North.”

“Glenn! Glenn!” said Perkins, half aloud, and musingly, as the doctor ceased. “Yes! it must be, it is the same! She was often seen visiting Charlestown, and going in the direction of the hospitals. Yes! yes! It must be she!”

Waiting only long enough in New Orleans to satisfy himself that the people alluded to by the physician had actually removed from the place where they resided some months before, and with the declared intention of going North, Perkins started home by the quickest route from New Orleans to the North. It was about the middle of February when he arrived in Boston. Among the first he met was *Milford*, to whom he had written from New Orleans a full account of the reason of his visiting that place so suddenly, and of his failure to discover the people of whom he was in search.

“My dear friend, I am glad to see you back!” said Milford, earnestly, as he grasped the hand of Perkins. “I wrote you a week ago, but, of course, that letter has not been received, and you are doubtless in ignorance of what has come to my knowledge within the last few days.”

“Tell me, quickly, what you mean!” said Perkins, grasping the arm of his friend.

“Be calm, and I will tell you,” replied Milford. “About a week ago I learned, by almost an accident, from the transfer clerk in the bank, that the young woman whom we knew as *Lizzy Glenn* had, early in the fall, come to the bank with certificates of stock, and had them transferred to the Massachusetts Insane Hospital, to be held by that institution so long as one *Hubert Ballantine* remained an inmate of its walls.”

“Well?” eagerly gasped Perkins.

“I know no more. It is for you to act in the matter; I could not.”

Without a moment’s delay, Perkins procured a vehicle, and in a little while was at the door of the institution.

“Is there a *Mr. Ballantine* in the asylum?” he asked, in breathless eagerness, of one of the attendants who answered his summons.

“No, sir,” was the reply.

“But,” said Perkins in a choking voice, “I have been told that there was a man here by that name.”

“So there was. But he left here about five days ago, perfectly restored to reason.”

Perkins leaned for a moment or two against the wall to support himself. His knees bent under him. Then he asked in an agitated voice —

“Is he in Boston?”

“I do not know. He was from the South, and his daughter has, in all probability, taken him home.”

“Where did they go when they left here?”

But the attendant could not tell. Nor did anyone in the institution know. The daughter had never told her place of residence.

Excited beyond measure, Perkins returned to Boston, and went to see Berlaps. From him he could learn nothing. It was two months or so since she had been there for work. Michael was then referred to; he knew nothing, but he had a suspicion that *Mrs. Gaston* got work for her.

“Mrs Gaston!” exclaimed Perkins, with a look of astonishment. “Who is Mrs. Gaston?”

“She is one of our seamstresses,” replied Berlaps.

“Where does she live?”

The direction was given, and the young man hurried to the place. But the bird had flown. Five or six days before, she had gone away in a carriage with a young lady who had been living with her, so it was said, and no one could tell what had become of her or her children.

Confused, perplexed, anxious, and excited, Perkins turned away and walked slowly home, to give himself time to reflect. His first fear was that Eugenia and her father, for he had now no doubt of their being the real actors in this drama, had really departed for New Orleans. The name of Mrs. Gaston, as being in association with the young woman calling herself Lizzy Glenn, expelled from his mind every doubt. That was the name of the friend in Troy with whom Eugenia had lived while there. It was some years since he had visited or heard particularly from Troy, and therefore this was the first intimation he had that Mrs. Gaston had removed from there, or that her situation had become so desperate as the fact of her working for Berlaps would indicate.

Chapter 12.

After Eugenia Ballantine, for she it really was, had removed to the humble abode of Mrs. Gaston, her mind was comparatively more at ease than it yet had been. In the tenderly manifested affection of one who had been a mother to her in former, happier years — she found something upon which to lean her bruised and wearied spirits. Thus far, she had been compelled to bear up alone — now there was an ear open to her, and her overburdened heart found relief in sympathy. There was a bosom upon which she could lean her aching head, and find a brief but blessed repose.

Toward the end of January, her father's symptoms changed rapidly, indicating one day more alarming features than ever, and the next presenting an encouraging aspect. The consequence was, that the mind of Eugenia became greatly agitated. Every day she repaired to the Asylum, with a heart trembling between hope and fear, to return sometimes with feelings of elation, and sometimes deeply depressed.

On the day after Doctor Richardson had promised to go to Lexington to look after Mrs. Gaston's little boy, the mother's anxious desire to see her child, from whom she had heard not a word for nearly three months, became so strong that she could with difficulty compose herself so far as to continue her regular employments. She counted the hours as they slowly wore away, thinking that the moment would never come when her eyes should rest upon her dear boy. As the doctor had not said at what hour he would return from Lexington, there was no period in the day upon which she could fix her mind as that in which she might expect to see her child; but she assumed that it would not be until the after part of the day, and forward to that time she endeavored to carry her expectations.

When Doctor Richardson parted with her, as has been seen, on the day previous, he was exquisitely pained under the conviction that the child he had met with in Lexington in so deplorable a condition, was none other than the son of Mrs. Gaston, who had been put out to Mr. Sharp at his instance. Hastily visiting a few patients that required immediate attention, he, very soon after parting with Mrs. Gaston, started in a coach for the town in which Henry had been apprenticed. On his arrival there, and before he had proceeded far along the main street, he observed the child he had before met, toiling along under a heavy burden. His clothes were soiled and ragged, and his hands and face dirty — indeed, he presented an appearance little or nothing improved from what it was a short time before. Driving close up to the sidewalk upon which the boy was staggering along under his heavy load, he reined up his horses, and called out, as he did so —

"Henry!"

The lad stopped instantly, and turned toward him, recognizing him as he did so.

"Don't you want to see your mother, Henry?" asked the doctor.

The bundle under which he was toiling fell to the ground, and he stood in mute surprise for a moment or two.

"What is your name?" Doctor Richardson asked.

"Henry Gaston," replied the child.

"Then jump in here, Henry, and I will take you to see your mother."

The boy took two or three quick steps toward the doctor, and then stopped suddenly and looked back at the load which had just fallen from his shoulders.

"Never mind that. Let Mr. Sharp look after it," said Doctor Richardson.

"But he will . . ." and Henry hesitated.

"Jump in, quick, my little fellow; and say good-bye in your heart to Mr. Sharp! You shall never go back there again."

The child sprang eagerly forward at this, and clambered into Doctor Richardson's coach. A word to the horses, and away they were bounding toward Boston. When Doctor Richardson arrived there, his mind was made up, as it had been, indeed, before he started, not to take Henry home to his mother that day. He saw that it would be too cruel to present the child to her in the condition he was; and, besides, he felt that, after having procured for him the situation, he could not look the mother in the face with her abused child in all the deformity of his condition before them. He, therefore, taken Henry to his own home; had him well washed, and dressed in a suit of comfortable clothing. The change produced in him was wonderful. The repulsive-looking object became an interesting boy; though with a pale, thin face, and a subdued, fearful look. He was very anxious to see his mother; but Doctor Richardson, desirous of making as great a change in the child's appearance and manner as possible, kept him at his house all night, and until the afternoon of the next day. Then he took him to his eagerly expectant mother.

Mrs. Gaston had waited and waited with all the patience and fortitude she could summon, hour after hour, until the afternoon had advanced far toward evening. So anxious and restless had she now become, that she could no longer sit at her work. She had been standing at the window looking out and watching each approaching vehicle for some time, until she felt sick from constantly awakening hope subsiding in disappointment, when she turned away, and, seating herself by the bed, buried her face despondingly in the pillow.

She had been sitting thus only a minute or two, when a slight noise at the door caused her to lift her head and turn in that direction. There stood a boy, with his eyes fixed upon her. For an instant she did not know him. Suffering, and

privation, and cruel treatment had so *changed* him, even after all the doctor's efforts to eradicate their sad effects, that the mother did not at first recognize her own child, until his plaintive voice, uttering her name, fell upon her ear. A moment more, and he was in her arms, and held tightly to her bosom. Her feelings we will not attempt to describe, when he related in his own artless and pathetic manner, all and more than the reader knows in regard to his treatment at Mr. Sharp's, too sadly confirmed by the change in the whole expression of his face.

While her mind was yet excited with mingled feelings of joy and pain, Eugenia came in from her regular visit to her father. Her step was quicker, her countenance more cheerful and full of hope.

"Oh, Mrs. Gaston!" she said, clasping her hands together, "my father is so much better today, and they begin to give me great hopes of his full restoration. But who is this? Not your little Henry?"

"Yes, this is my poor, dear boy, whom I have gotten back once more," Mrs. Gaston said, the tears glistening upon her eyelids.

After a few words to, and in relation to Henry, the thoughts of Eugenia went off again to her father, and she spoke many things in regard to him, all of which bore a highly encouraging aspect. For the three or four days following this, Mr. Ballantine showed stronger and stronger indications of returning reason; his daughter was almost beside herself with hope and joy.

Earlier than usual, one day about the second week in February, she went over to the asylum to pay her accustomed visit. She was moving on, after having entered the building, in the direction of the room occupied by her father, when an attendant stepped up, and touching her arm in a respectful manner, said —

"This direction, if you please."

There was something in the manner of the attendant that seemed to Eugenia a little mysterious, but she followed as he led the way. He soon paused at the door of an apartment, and half whispering in her ear said —

"Your father is in this room."

Eugenia entered alone. Her father was standing near the fire in an attitude of deep thought. He lifted his eyes as she entered, and looked her inquiringly in the face for some moments. She saw in an instant that he was greatly changed — that *reason* had, in fact, again assumed her sway over the empire of his mind.

"My dear, dear father!" she instantly exclaimed, springing toward him.

"Eugenia! Eugenia!" he ejaculated, in turn, as he held her from him for a moment or two. "Can this be my own Eugenia? Surely we are both dreaming! But it is! It is!" and he drew her to his bosom, and held her there in a long embrace.

"But what does all this mean, my dear child? Why are we here? What place is it? Why am I so unlike myself that I doubt my own identity? Why am I so changed? Surely! surely! I am not Hubert Ballantine!"

"Be composed, dear father!" said Eugenia, with an instinctive feeling of concern. "We will go from here at once, and then we will talk over all that seems strange to you now."

As she said this, Eugenia pulled a bell, and requested the attendant who answered to call the principal of the institution. He came immediately, and she had a brief interview with him in regard to the propriety of removing her father instantly. He acquiesced, and ordered a carriage to be brought to the door. In this she entered with him, and directed the driver to take them to the *Tremont House* in Boston. There handsome rooms were ordered, and every effort was made by her to cause external circumstances to assume a character similar to what he had been accustomed to in former years. But her own appearance — her plain, worn, meager garments, and above all, her changed face — so pale, so thin, so careworn, so marred by years of intense suffering — sadly perplexed him. Still he had a faint glimpse of the truth, and as his mind's eye turned intently toward the point from whence light seemed to come, he more than suspected the real facts in the case — at least the leading fact, that he had been out of his mind for a long time. He could remember distinctly the burning of the vessel at sea, and also the days and nights of suffering which were spent in open boats after leaving the vessel. But all from that time, was dim and incoherent, like the vagaries of a dream.

After satisfying her father's mind, as far as she dared do so at once, in regard to the real position in which he suddenly found himself placed, she left him, and going to the proper representative of the asylum, procured a transfer of the stock held for the support of Mr. Ballantine, and then placed the certificates in the hands of an agent for sale, procuring from him at the same time an advance of one hundred dollars for immediate use. This was all accomplished in the course of a couple of hours. After this arrangement, she paid Mrs. Gaston a hurried visit — explained the happy change in her father's state of mind, and promising to see her again in a little while; had her trunk sent to the hotel, to which she herself returned, after having purchased various articles of clothing. When she next saw her father, her external appearance was greatly changed. This seemed to afford him real pleasure.

The next two or three days she spent in gradually unfolding to him the whole history of the past five years. At every step of her progress in this, she trembled for the result — like one traversing a narrow, unknown, and dangerous passage in the dark. But on the third day, after nearly everything had been told, she began to feel confidence that all would be well.

The agitation and strong indignation exhibited when she related the treatment she had received in New Orleans, especially from Mr. Paralette, alarmed her greatly. But this gave way to a calm and rational consideration of the right course to be pursued to prove his identity and claim his property, to do which he was well aware would not be attended with any real difficulty, especially as with the return of reason had come back a distinct recollection of every particular connected with his business and property in New Orleans.

In the meantime, Mrs. Gaston was looked after, and temporary arrangements made for her comfort. As soon as Mr. Ballantine fully understood the position of things in New Orleans, he insisted upon an immediate return to that city, which Eugenia did not oppose. Preparations were therefore made for their early departure, and completed in a very short time.

It was nearly four o'clock on the afternoon of the day fixed for their departure, and when they were about leaving for the coach, that a servant came to the door of their parlor and said that a gentleman wished to see Mr. Ballantine. The servant was requested to ask him to walk up. Eugenia was in the parlor, and could not but feel surprised that anyone in Boston should wish to see her father. She waited, therefore, to see who the individual was. He soon made his appearance — entering without speaking, and advancing toward her with his eyes fixed intently upon her face.

“*William!*” she ejaculated, in a quick, low, astonished voice, and sank instantly upon a chair, as pale as ashes, and trembling in every limb.

“*Eugenia!* Can this be, indeed, my own long-lost Eugenia?” said Perkins, for it was he, springing eagerly forward and taking the half-fainting girl in his arms.

It needed no words of explanation from either — no renewal of early vows — no new pledges of affection — for “Love has a wordless language all its own, heard in the heart.”

“My dear children!” said the father, coming forward, as soon as he could recall his bewildered senses, and taking both in his arms, “the long night has at last broken, and the blessed sun has thrown his first bright beams upon us. Let us look up to HIM who chastens his children for good, and bless him not only for the present joy, but for past sorrow — it was not sent in anger, but in mercy.”

The departure of Mr. Ballantine and Eugenia was deferred for some days, during which time, at the urgent solicitation of Mr. Perkins, the *nuptial* ceremonies, so long delayed, were celebrated. He then accompanied them to New Orleans, where all his property was restored to Mr. Ballantine. He did not resume business, but returned to the North to reside with his daughter and her husband.

Nothing more remains to be said, except that Mrs. Gaston was never after compelled to work for the slop-shop men. Mr. Perkins and his lovely wife cared well for her.