

"Indeed, have you? From my sister, perhaps?" asked the baronet irresolutely, but with some annoyance.

"No, but from myself," answered Glitka, opening her eyes as a she-panther might have opened hers ere she showed her white fangs and sprang on her prey. "You are a lord, it seems. I am Miladi's very humble servant, to obey her bell, to study her caprice. And you are a *seigneur*. Yet, traitor, craven, dissembler, is not this ring"—and she showed him on her finger a golden hoop set with small blue stones—"the betrothal-ring you put on my finger at Arad? and are you not my promised husband, if there be faith in old customs or the troth-pledge of man?"

"Upon my word, Glitka," answered the baronet, in deprecatory tones, "I hoped you had forgotten or learned to take a more reasonable view of anything that was said in far-off Hungary between you and me. How could I be expected to understand your ancient customs, and to be bound by what seems binding to you? We liked each other, I dare say, but I was a mere traveller, a mere bird of passage, and—"

"And you thought that you could win the heart of the Hungarian girl, and cast it aside like a faded flower?" she flashed out; "and you knew so little of a Magyar as to believe the thing was safe. Safe!" she repeated, with a sibilant sound like the hiss of a snake. "No; we of the true race do not brook deceit. I would sooner die than let you wed another than Glitka Eberganyi."

"Glitka, be reasonable!" expostulated Sir Richard. "I admired you, of course, and do still, and there was an exchange of rings and the like, but indeed, my good girl, there was never a serious possibility of a marriage between you and me. Such a thing would have been a simple death-blow to a gentleman in my position. I was then a captain, now I am a baronet with an estate, but scarcely any rents: that much you know. I cannot afford to marry. Certainly, Glitka, even when first I saw you, the belle of the village, at your good old grandfather's great farmhouse near Arad, I must have felt that I could not wreck my prospects, seriously, by marrying you."

"Yet I am as noble as yourself!" fiercely retorted Glitka. "We are all noble—except a few Slavs, like the glazier and the smith—in our village: first as free Magyars, then as being ennobled by the Empress hundreds of years ago. The Empress-Queen gave the rank of Baron to every free peasant who killed a

Turkish invader. My ancestors have killed many Turks. Your own eyes have seen the scimitars and matchlocks of old foes—infidels, turbaned dogs—hanging on the oaken walls of my grandfather's house. And I can remember seeing my grandsire show you, the English stranger, with honest pride, the grand parchment with the gold and colour, and the great seal, of the paper from Imperial Vienna that made *his* grandsire a Baron. My father, too, had the rank of Baron. I, too, am Baroness Glitka, servant as I am, and Mademoiselle as they call me. We peasant nobles, Polish or Magyar, know our value, and will not be dogs to lick a master's feet!"

"Glitka," answered the baronet, in sheer despair, "you, with your impassioned nature and your reliance on old usages, scarcely can do justice to a used-up, out-at-elbows gentleman like myself. I am in debt, poor, and worried. There are times when to put a pistol to my head and blow my brains out appears the only natural result of my position. I only wish you would keep quiet, and leave me to battle with my creditors as best I may."

A woman is seldom cruel to a man who bows his head, and owns himself in the struggle of life defeated and hopeless. Glitka's eyes lost some of their menace, and her voice was softer as she said—

"Yes, for you too, it seems, life is not a bed of roses. Poor Milord! Poor Richard!"

But in a moment after the tigress-soul in her flamed forth.

"Hear you, Sir Richard," said her ladyship's confidential maid, with bitter emphasis: "a woman who has loved seldom hurts the man who has left her, unless he makes the pain more than she can bear. So shall it be now. I came over to England, and became a servant, more that I might meet you than for any other cause. The old home is broken up. My uncle's farm—it was his when the grandfather died—has passed into the hands of the Hebrew money-lender who had lent the money on mortgage, and Glitka and her brothers earn their bread as they may. But, little as you deem my words to be true, I have a hold on you, proud Sir Richard, that you can no more shake off than a strayed lamb can get free from the wolf of the woods or the snake of the fens. Marry Miss Violet Mowbray, even for her thousands, and see what comes of it!"

She curtsied, and left him.

END OF CHAPTER THE TWENTIETH.

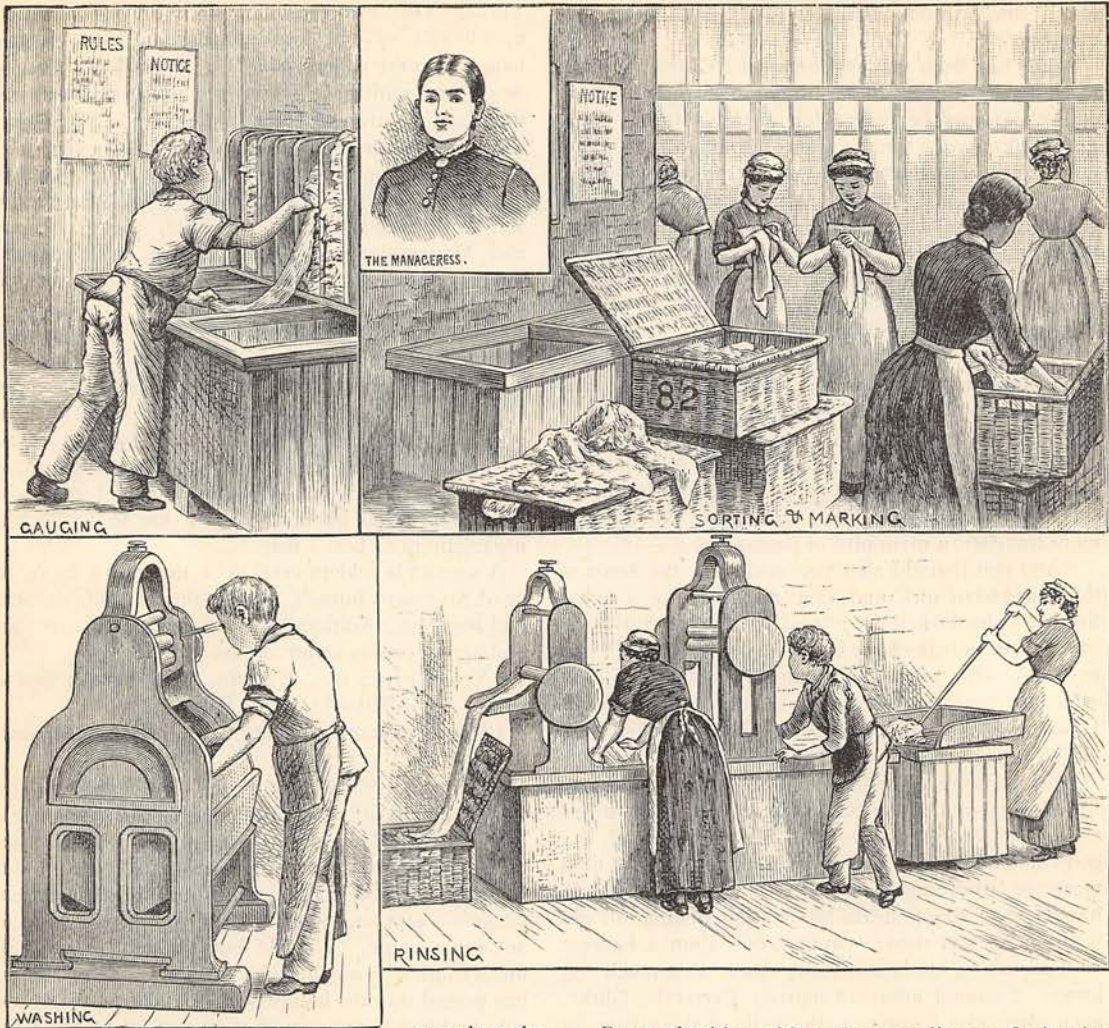
## A DAY AT A MODEL LAUNDRY.

**I**N what way do you consider yours a model laundry?"

The answer came promptly. "In every way. Not only in perfection of work and sanitary details, but also in the methods employed, the arrangements for our workers, the specially planned building, and the per-

fect order, punctuality, and despatch observed in every department. We aim at perfection all through; and if we have not yet attained a standard so high, I think we may claim that in the year we have been at work we have so far advanced as to leave us foremost amongst similar institutions worked upon sanitary and scientific principles. On these grounds we call





myself the model laundry: so far as I know, the only one in this part of London."

Thus spoke the manageress, a pleasant-mannered, kind-looking woman, who, at a first glance, struck me as too amiable and benevolent-looking for the post that she occupied, yet not, as we afterwards noted, without a shrewd alertness, which seemed to note everything that was going on around her without worry or excitement.

"I had a long training in business-like habits before I came here," she explained, in answer to some remark we made. "It was an easy matter to apply my training to a new sphere of work." What a moral these few words carried with them! Would that all girls who have to work could have the benefit of a thorough training in business-like habits.

We were standing at the door of the manageress's little office, close to the entrance of the building, from which we could see a large room lighted with skylights, having clean-looking lime-washed walls, and a bare but beautifully clean floor.

ourselves the model laundry

Rows of tables, with various appliances for ironing, were occupied by women and girls, working away with a pleasant little buzz of conversation, and forming, from our point of view, a charming picture in their large white aprons and pretty muslin caps. Our natural impulse would have led us straight into this large hall and launched us in an animated conversation with half a dozen of those bright-faced ironers; but this unwise impetuosity was promptly checked by the sensible suggestion of our business-like guide that we should begin at the beginning, and go straight through the various departments.

"Our workers arrive at the laundry at eight o'clock in the morning," she informed us. "They have their breakfast at home as a rule. There is a separate room for them to take their meals in, fitted with a stove. They can bring anything they choose in the way of provisions, which the woman in charge will cook for them, and have ready by the dinner-hour, which is from twelve till one. We require our people to be punctual, and to insure this, we have a rule that any one not here by eight in the morning will not be admitted to her work for an hour. We find this an



excellent arrangement, for, except in cases of real necessity, no one is willing to lose an hour's wages for the sake of a few minutes.

"As soon as the workers arrive, the forewoman gives each a cap and apron, the property of, and provided by, the laundry. These are not allowed to be taken out of the building on any pretext whatever, but are delivered up to the forewoman, who stands at the door to receive them as the women and girls pass out. We like them to look nice and clean at their work; it has such an enlivening, cheering effect upon the minds of the workers themselves. If you were to see some of them without their caps and aprons, you would be astonished."

This was no exaggeration. Some little time after, we watched them file out to dinner. Each one doffed her cap, handing it, with the large white apron, to the forewoman. What a metamorphosis! Before they had looked so bright and fresh, and even pretty; now we saw many rough, dishevelled, most unpicturesque-looking women.

"Many of these are fresh hands, for we have been getting busier every week," the manageress explained. "Our older hands are much more presentable; I think the pretty nattiness of the mob-cap and apron teaches them unconsciously the value of order and neatness in dress. I have seen a girl glance at her torn untidy dress quite apologetically as she took her apron off. The contrast was painful even to herself."

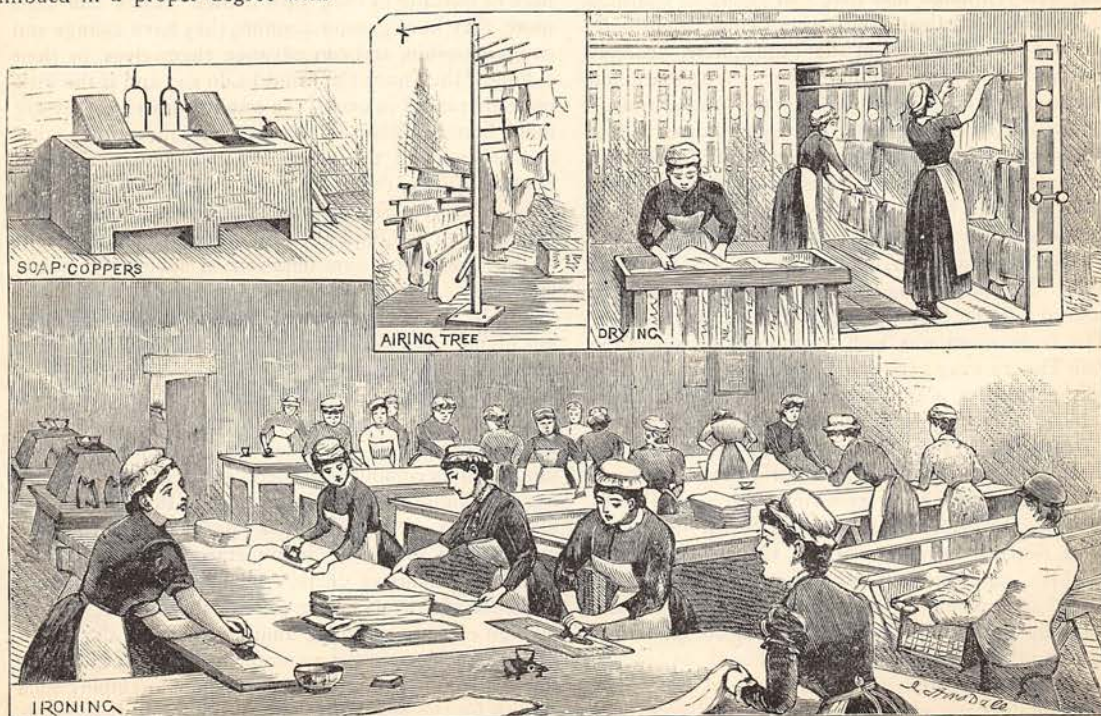
"Then you aim at improving the general condition of your work-people?" I inquired.

"We aim at instilling into them notions of neatness and self-respect," the manageress replied. "It is better for our work that they should be imbued in a proper degree with

such a spirit. Every inducement is offered to make them take a pride and interest in the perfection of their work. Our best ironers we pay by the piece, and as no imperfect work is sent out, their own advantage demands that there should be no mistakes."

We had by this time arrived at the sorting-room, where three or four women were busily at work. Each basket as it came in was counted out by one person before another who held the list in her hand and checked it off. Two others were engaged in rapidly stitching in the particular mark on such garments as had not already come into their hands. Any inaccuracy in a list was immediately noted, and in the case of an article being missing, a memorandum was handed in to the clerk, who signified the same by post to the lady from whose house the linen came, on a form provided for the purpose. If too many articles had been sent, the list was corrected accordingly. We were surprised to see how inaccurate some of the lists were.

Our next visit was to the wash-house, a room of small dimensions compared with the ironing-room. The employment of machinery has so minimised the amount of time and labour required, that it is perfectly marvellous to see the quantity of work that can be got through in a small space. Two boys of about sixteen years of age were employed in arranging articles of linen in some locker-like divisions, which, when full, were placed in a machine. The necessary water being added, by means of a tap connected with a tank, where the proper proportions of water, soap and soda were simmering away in readiness, the machine was made to revolve by means of an engine,





working away in a little engine-room connected with the wash-house. At a given moment the boy disconnected his machine by means of a handle, took out the divided box containing the clothes, emptied his machine by turning on a tap over a grating, then put the clothes back, and repeated the whole process.

"This is our head washer," the matron said, with a kindly smile, laying her hand on the head of the elder lad, a rosy-faced, good-looking boy, in a canvas jacket and overalls. "These two do all our washing: that is to say, they supply, fill, and empty the machines, for which they get twelve or fourteen shillings a week and uniform."

From the lads we turned away to take in more accurately the fittings of the room. There were several tank-like arrangements round the walls, into which we peered. One contained hot water, soap, and soda; in another we found a heap of fine white linen simmering away by means of steam. The absence of any immediate application of fire enabled the boiling to be done in a wooden tank instead of a metal one—a great improvement, as it seemed to us, both in general cleanliness, saving of labour, and preserving the whiteness of the linen. The locker-like divisions full of clothes are taken from the washing machine, put on a little truck, and wheeled over to the boiling tank, into which they are put one by one. Should there be any traces of dirt lingering in them, they are handed over to a woman, who gives such places an extra soap and rub. The next tank contained rinsing-water, another one blue-water, and in a corner was one lined with metal, for distilling superabundant steam into the soft water in which all the fine flannel articles are washed.

We passed now from the wash-house into the large, clean, well-ventilated hall that had before so charmed us. Although all the clothes were being dried here, there was no steaminess in the atmosphere, scarcely the sign of a garment hanging about. We soon found the reason of this. Our guide pointed out a row of doors, which, when opened, displayed horses full of linen, being rapidly dried off by means of hot air, and looking delightfully white. There is a drying-ground for fine weather; but judging by the appearance of the linen we saw, we are not sure that its beauty of colour does not depend more upon the washing than the drying. At any rate, no open-air drying could have produced a better result, even in the country.

The large room was well occupied. Close by the hot-air closets were two mangles, displaying in their bright cleanliness a great contrast to the oil-clogged, groaning, lumbering affair so often to be seen filling up the greater part of some poor woman's parlour. Several women were busily folding and sprinkling articles to be mangled. Further on were row upon row of ironing-tables, the wall close by them being lined with lockers bearing the names of the various customers, into which each garment, when perfectly dressed, inspected, and mended if any damage has been done, is placed, until the whole number is complete according to the list. We observed a board for notices, on which were posted up remarks such as—"Mrs. Nicholson does not wish starch in the children's pina-

fores," "Mrs. Brown does not wish her dresses quite so stiff," &c. &c.

At a little distance from us the calender was in full operation, all table-linen, pillow-cases, and so on, being passed through it, to the very great improvement of their general appearance. The polished effect on shirt-fronts which some people so greatly admire we found was produced with infinite labour, by passing a small oval-surfaced iron swiftly backwards and forwards until the high polish is attained. It is a rule of the establishment that everything shall be sent away properly aired.

Our next visit was to the disinfecting-room, which, we were glad to observe, was quite away from the rest of the building, and where every necessary appointment for cleaning infected articles is provided.

We were surprised to find that the best ironers earn as much as 35s. a week, the usual average for an ordinary worker being from 15s. to £1. A very accurate system of accounts is kept, by which we were enabled to observe that on one or two occasions small sums of money had been lent in advance.

"In cases of sickness or great distress I have occasionally done so," the manageress informed us; "but only where a good character has been already earned. We are glad to show any kindness where we can safely do so, and we expect some consideration in return. Every one is bound by our rules to give a reasonable amount of overtime when there is any great pressure. Sometimes we get a parcel of work required completed in twelve hours. We should not be a model laundry if we were not equal to such an emergency, and our workers know that their best interests lie in co-operating with us. They infinitely prefer working here to working in their own homes. They can earn more, they have greater comfort, they have change and companionship, and can advance themselves in their calling, if they have the mind to do so; and if the little ones are placed in one of the public nurseries, they are much better off than in a home where the mother takes in washing, and the room is full of steam and wet clothes. Then, the assurance to the public that their linen is really cleansed instead of being brought into contact with dirt, bad air, and perhaps disease, ought to be a weighty consideration in favour of public laundries. When, too, people find they can have perfect sanitary arrangements guaranteed for a charge not higher than that of any good laundress, they must appreciate the benefit."

As we picked our way back to the station, we could not help recalling an incident in modern literature, where it is recounted how, to prevent mankind from becoming the mere slave of some mighty uncontrollable force, greater even than steam or electricity, a certain people had passed laws forbidding any man to invent or manufacture any kind of machine on penalty of death, which led us by a natural sequence of thought to the remark that, in these days of high education for the humblest classes, the application of science to the common necessities of life may prove a solution to the enigma of how to employ such classes for the best welfare of the community at large.