

The Alligator in North Carolina, BY H. H. BRIMLEY

The gentle and comely alligator is an interesting creature when approached in the proper spirit. Who was it—one of our early historians, I think—that classified the alligator as an insect? This is somewhat contrary to our present-day classification, but the beauty of his expressive countenance is the same, insect or not.

In North Carolina this animal is found in the lowlands of the eastern part of the State, mostly from Neuse river, south. I have recently learned, from two separate sources, that they occur sparingly in Tyrrell county, and this is, so far as I can ascertain, the most northerly limit of their range. Along Neuse river, from some miles above Newbern to its mouth, they are fairly common in the more remote streams and ponds, more particularly on the south side of the river in its lower reaches. They grow large, too, and several said to have measured around twelve feet have come within my knowledge. I know of none of that length being taken within the past ten years, however. But 12-foot alligators are not common anywhere

The first shot went over. The second was followed by a great commotion in the water as the gator went down. This meant a hit and it was then in order to wade out closer so as to be surer of a killing shot should he reappear. The water continued to show signs of agitation where he had dived until one foot—not a vulnerable point—showed as he rolled over. He had evidently got it straight and hard and I expected every minute that he would sink for good—and be lost. But I kept getting nearer, so that danger continued to lessen. Sometimes the tail only would show, sometimes a foot, sometimes the end of his nose. Once the head rose clear, side on, but it was gone again so quickly that the snap shot it called forth, while fairly accurate, was not fatal. Again a period of "now you see him and now you don't," the hunter all the time wading closer and closer. Finally the head came up clear of the water, with throat exposed. Another quick shot was necessary, but this time, the little .25 soft-point bullet went home. A few more eddies—and all was still.

I had then, and have still, a prejudice against dead alligators that may not be good and dead. So I waited some ten or fifteen minutes for something to occur, but there was nothing

might at any time have escaped by diving, but the idea did not seem to occur to his slow-moving brain. For the third time the rifle let go its load and water again flew far beyond. All good line shots, however, and a very slight difference in the elevation of the sights would account for the misses. Shot No. 4 went home. With a movement, or even a quiver, the gator lay dead upon the surface. "Pick up your paddle and drive her down quick, before he sinks," came from the stern of the boat and we ran her alongside. Only a part of the animal's head was still above the surface and bubbles were coming from the mouth. One fore foot was caught, the nose slipped over it and drawn tight. For fear of a possible death flurry—and an alligator can do things with his tail—he was pushed away from the boat and the line made fast. He sank at once, and but for the quick approach and attachment of line, he would have been lost to a certainty. He measured eight and a half feet and was a clean, well-built gator, rather slender than bulky. The work of the fatal bullet was noticeable. It had penetrated the soft skin back of the cranium, had expanded as it struck the bone and had opened up the whole top of the skull as if with a charge of dynamite.

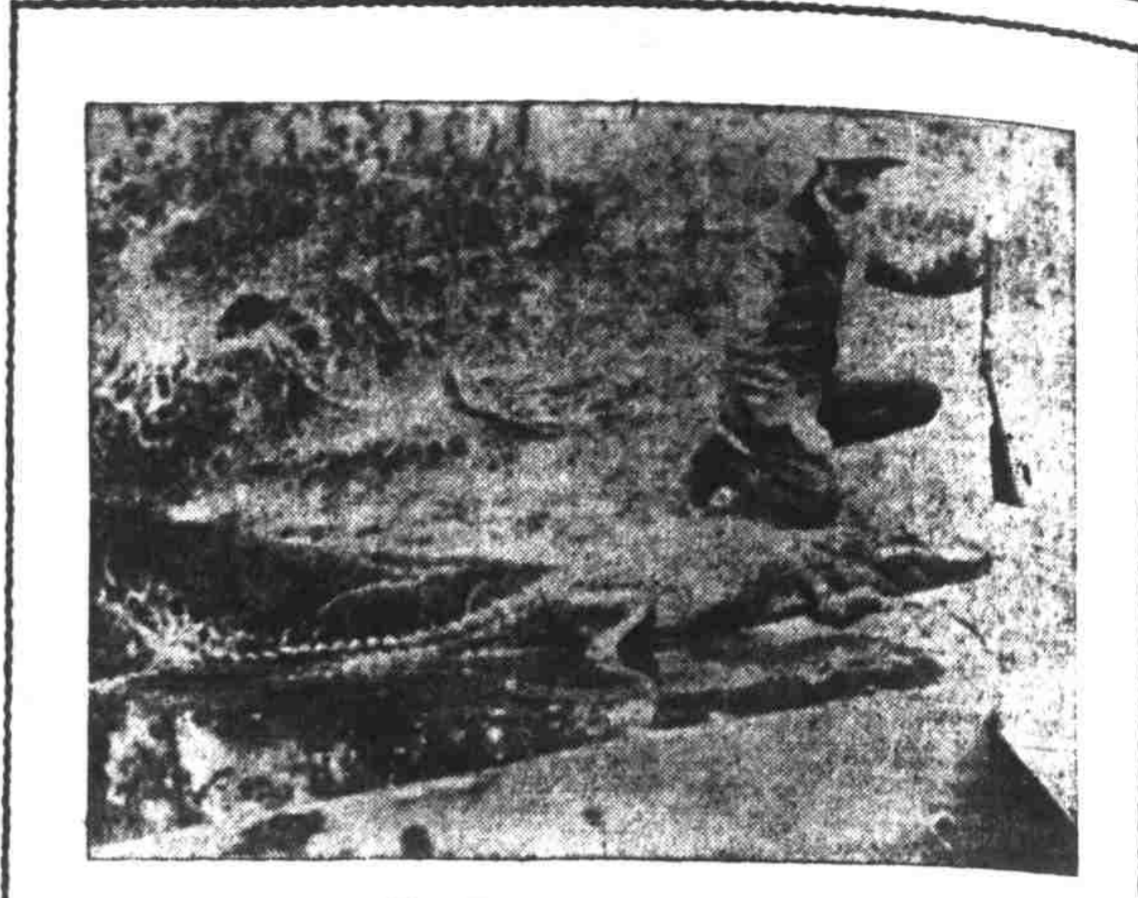
besides. All under water, of course. The gator had slipped by the end of the pole and had come back nearly to the mouth of the hole, when the hand holding the stick struck his nose. He snapped down on that hand good and hard, but, luckily, turned it loose immediately. His teeth were very sharp and one penetrated the knuckle joint at the base of the middle finger. It was excessively painful for a few minutes, so much so as to cause nausea for a time. But, after that, the gator had to be collected and his skin and skull are now in the possession of the man who was bitten, the skull being on my desk at the present time.

I have examined the stomach contents of a number and what one finds inside is quite interesting. The one above mentioned that was killed from the boat contained nothing whatever in the way of animal matter. A double handful of round pebbles and about the same amount of pieces of charcoal was all his digestive fluids had to work on. Another killed on this pond contained the remains of a young heron, some grasshopper fragments of one or more mud turtles, some pieces of wood and a June bug. In two cases I have found the brass bases of shotgun shells, one of ten gauge and one of twelve. One contained a number of pieces of brick, one piece measuring several inches each way. Several contained snakes. Small chunks of wood, vegetable matter and mud are common. My opinion is that these foreign substances are taken in accidentally. The gator sees a crawfish, or turtle, or snake crawling through the mud and makes a rush for it, with mouth open. With the animal food there goes in also any foreign substance in the way of the open mouth. The animal matter digests, the rest accumulates. Hence the generally accepted opinion that alligators swallow grasshoppers, bricks, lightwood knots, etc., for ballast. They don't.

Ever hear a gator bellow? It reminds one of a bull with a trill in his voice, and the sound carries a long way on a still summer evening. It is very impressive.

I have never found a nest while it was occupied, but have seen several old ones after the surrounding vegetation had died down. Those I have seen may have been some six feet across by two or three high. The female lays her eggs in this mass of decaying vegetation, covers them up and leaves them to be hatched by the heat of the sun and that engendered by the decay of the vegetable matter comprising the nest. The young are some eight or ten inches long when hatched and are a staple article of trade in Florida.

Of course, alligators hibernate during the winter and do not appear ac-



The Hunter and the Hunted.



The Home of the Alligator.

now, Florida not excepted.

During the past few summers it has been the privilege and pleasure of the writer to become more or less intimately associated with the alligator in his native haunts in the region above referred to and in the southeastern corner of the State. We read one of maximum size for the State Museum collections, but such a one has proved difficult to secure so far. The writer has collected a number, several of which have been used in the museum in various ways, but the real "big" gator is not yet there. But he exists in the State and the coming summer may see him gathered in.

When an alligator is swimming the only parts of his anatomy that show above water are, usually, his eyes and the tip of his nose. The eye is the vulnerable spot, being close above and forward of the very small brain. Unless the hunter is well above his quarry the ordinary soft lead bullet is a very uncertain missile for the delivery of a fatal shot at a swimming alligator. With a modern high velocity rifle, however, shooting a soft-nose bullet, the smashing power is so great that a much larger area of the bones of the skull is fractured and, in consequence, a shot delivered low down between the eyes from directly in front or behind, or a quartering shot from in front, is more than likely to smash the thick bones surrounding the brain, and prove instantly fatal. But the mark is very small and the rifle must be held to a hair to place the ball where it should go.

Details of one or two kills on swimming alligators will give the reader a much better idea of how it is done than mere generalizing. The writer was wading out in a shallow body of water frequented by the animals and one was seen swimming, or rather floating, some seventy-five yards away

ing doing. Now, I didn't like the job a little bit, but that gator I had to have, so I started feeling for that supposedly dead alligator with my feet. The water was over my belt and had he proved to be alive he could have tackled me low and hard, with but little to be said against it on my part. Thinking a knife a better weapon than a rifle in case of a scrimmage I got mine out and held it ready. It was a good knife with heavy 8-inch blade, that would have done some powerful carving in the hands of a man as scared as I was, had it been necessary. But, thank goodness, it wasn't. To make a long story shorter, I finally stepped on him—and jumped almost out of the water. But he was really dead and I got one of my feet under his tail, hoisted that to the surface, and towed him ashore. He measured exactly nine feet and was a good, stout, powerful gator.

Two men were hunting from a boat both used paddles until one was sighted swimming. The Bowman then laid aside his paddle and took up his rifle. Quietly and carefully the boat moved forward until the gator turned and started to swim away. This was on a large pond, where the water was quite deep, and precautions had to be taken to secure the animal—in case of a kill—before he could sink. The gunner made a slip-nose in a line and laid it handy to his grasp. The boat was now impelled more quickly, though silently, as before, and the distance lessened perceptibly. "The him now," whispered the man in the stern, as he ceased paddling. The rifle spoke and a lot of water spouted a hundred yards beyond. Again and the shot fell short. The paddler said something that sounded like "lamb" and went to work again. This time he brought the boat up to within about forty yards before stopping his paddle and giving the word. The gator was swimming more strongly now and

it was a soft-point Mauser of seven millimetres diameter and a hundred and seventy-three grains weight, fired with a velocity of twenty-two hundred and sixty feet per second.

While skinning this gator, at the foot of the dam, a little fellow of about four and a half feet was seen floating about seventy-five yards away, and his skin was needed for a particular purpose. The first shot went over, the second struck right below the eye and completely cut away the whole front of the head, throwing the cut-off part into the air and killing him instantly. On picking him up the only part of the head left attached to the body was the lower jaw and the base of the skull.

In early spring, before the water is sufficiently warm for them to be very active, alligators may be caught in their holes in suitable situations. When an occupied burrow is found one may often be worried into shutting down on the pole so fiercely and persistently that he may be dragged out of the hole still hanging on. This was the case of one whose skull I wanted for exhibition. Not wishing to insure the skull by shooting through the brain—about the only instantly fatal spot—he was fastened by one forefoot and the bullet put through where his heart should have been. He lay so quiet that I stepped up and put one foot on his body—the big game hunters are usually photographed with their quarry. Quick as a flash his head swung around, with mouth agape, and his jaws just grazed my leg. He got his quietus after that, all right. One of the boys standing by said that it was the wickedest looking mouth he had ever seen, as it swung around.

A medium-sized fellow was in his hole and had been biting at the stick. The stick was about nine feet long and the operator had his full length in the burrow, with his arm up to the

swimming along shore. He saw it when a couple of hundred yards away, took his line, and operated as a submarine. I watched the water between him and the totally unsuspecting cormorant. When ten or a dozen yards from the bird his eyes momentarily showed; he sank again, and the next thing he knew his jaws came up with the doomed bird between. He took in no brickets with his meal that time.

One day while trying to catch a mess of fish for camp at a pond deep in the woods, I had an experience I had left my gun at camp and taken camera instead. While fixing up my tackle at the landing I saw something out in the water swimming in. It turned out to be a gator, as I estimated about seven feet long. He came in within about thirty yards of my position, to the mouth of which was the small bay at the head of which was the landing. Thought I "I'll take your picture, old man, if you'll only look pleasant long enough and aren't afflicted with stage fright." So I got my camera ready and waded out slowly, oh, so slowly. I kept

altering the focus as I waded; fifty feet, forty, thirty-five, thirty—when he sank slowly, facing my way. The water was peaty brown and any swimming object would have been invisible half a foot below the surface. I was up to my waist—and I did not know what that gator was thinking about as he went down. I didn't like the sensation much. I had on hunting knife and hatchet and drew the former, holding it in my teeth, as both hands were needed for the camera. Then I waded out a little farther, when he again appeared not much over twenty feet away. Slowly I shifted the focus, found his lovely visage in the finder, and pressed the bulb. At the click of the shutter he went down but came up again soon a few feet farther out. I snapped him again, when he left. The pictures were sharp enough, but the detail too small for them to be of any use.

I haven't found out yet what that gator was thinking about when I got out my knife on the possibility that I was considering the question of tasting my leg.

choked with children who were and called after her as she made given her them. Mrs. Gray way, so she thought she would up and ride home. The all-was and balm and she did not mind long walk up town.

The day passed as all days and it was quite dark when she tiredly climbed the three flights of stairs to her home. As her father was and it was seven o'clock before was released. From eight to ten What long hours for a child to be a child of only three or four and just at the time when she had to hoard her strength in anticipation of the strain of coming years. She play more and she did not mind the cruelty of it all.

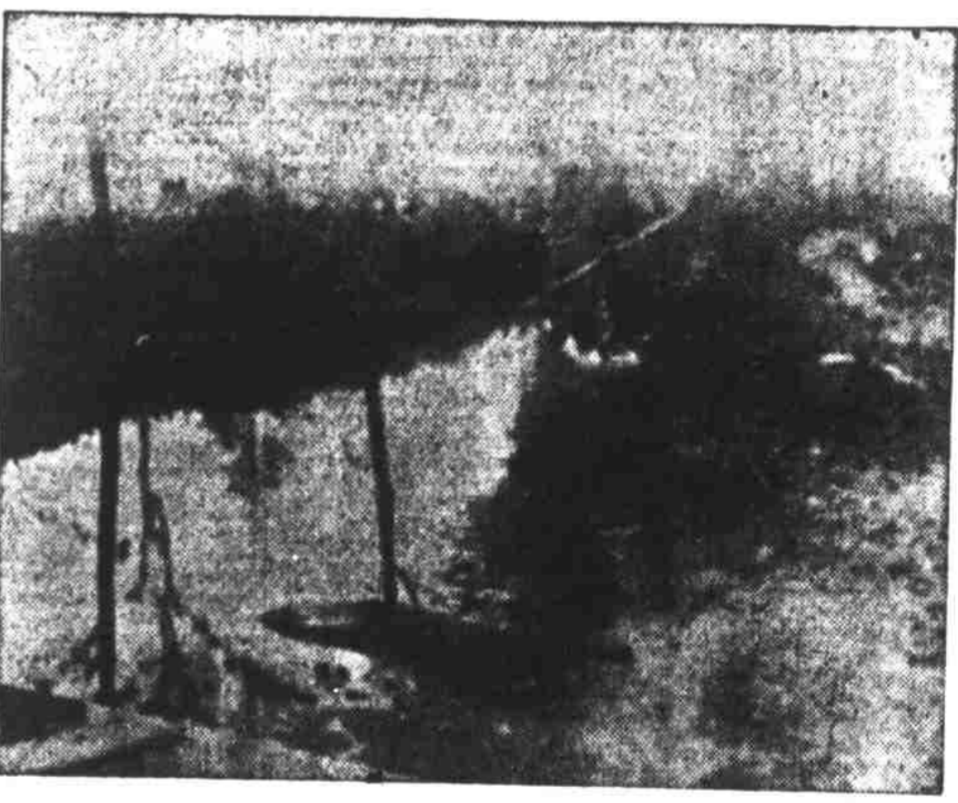
"Well, Silvia," said her mother, "how did you get along?" "I ran myself out of breath," I was stairs and down stairs, waiting on one, waiting on that one snatched by one and scolded by another. Oh, what beautiful things I saw. Lovely white silk dresses, beautiful velvets, and the dresses were beautiful—some of them others were hideously ugly and cause their gowns did not make it look handsome they got mad. I would madam Madam made a behind the backs and did not get one bit. To-morrow I am going one of the big shops to match a pair of ribbon."

After the child was in bed Mrs. Gray stretched and thought and then gave a deep sigh. It was nearly midnight when she folded her work and almost fell asleep.

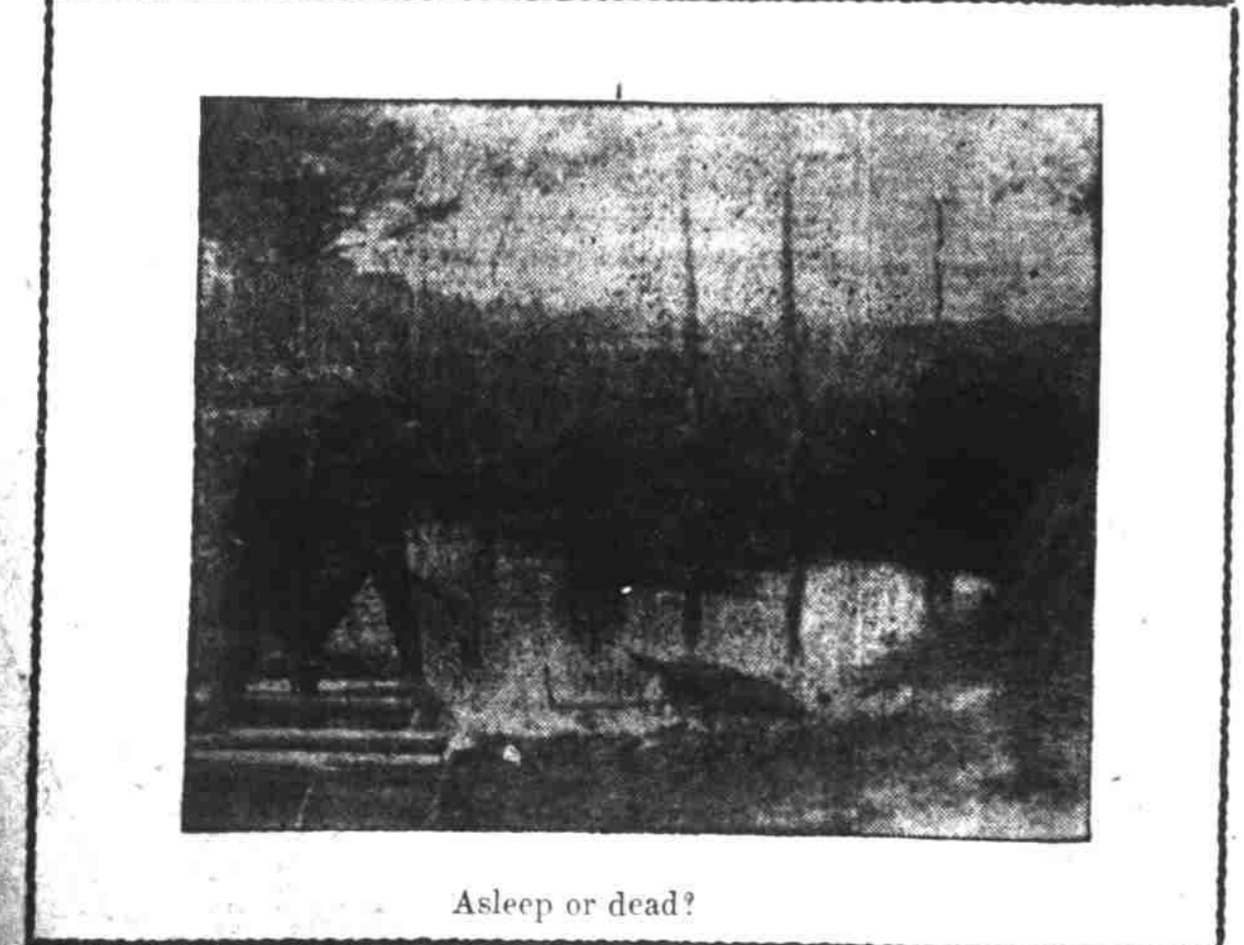
"Now, Silvia," said Madam, "sure and get the exact color. It is not a perfect match, I cannot it and I will take it out of your array."

Silvia hurried out into the street and almost ran, she was so pale to get another change of look at shop windows and the most wonderful of all to go inside.

She stopped for a moment and gazed into the window. There were ribbons, hats, costumes, net, and petticoats and jewelry, beautiful chains, rings with shining stones, pocketbooks and many more things than her child could comprehend. Then she walked in. A moment she was almost lost. There were elegant dresses, beautiful little children, one girl who had brown curls like Silvia's, was beautifully dressed in brown silk coat and skirt, and a handsome gold bracelet. Silvia gave a gasp of delight then looked down at her hands and still shabbier than her own and her heart grew bitter. She had pretty clothes and a gold bracelet, she could not have them. She was lost to sight in the crowd. She began to make her way toward the ribbon counter. Her eyes were riveted on the shelves. A beautiful bracelet caught her eye. It was just try it on. Finally she put it on. It was a beautiful bracelet and she felt as if she had found a new world. She then drew back and looked at her hand. The bracelet was just what she needed. She was a woman now. She was a woman who was as usual, but she was saying aloud "Lead us into temptation, that you may tempt us." "What did you say, dear?" asked her mother. "Nothing, mama," answered the child.



The Finishing Touch.



Asleep or dead?

tively until the water begins to get warm in the spring, usually, in our climate, about the middle or latter part of May. Where herons and cormorants nest (their breeding places being mostly over the water) the alligators loaf around the rookeries on the lookout for young birds that have fallen from the nests. Once, while wading out into a small bay and well hidden by the surrounding bushes and trees overhanging the water, I noticed a nearly full-grown cormorant swimming. The nest to which it belonged was in a small bushy cypress a few yards from shore, some of the lower limbs of which hung down into the water. The cormorant swam up to one of these hanging branches and grasping the twigs with both bill and claws, started to climb back to the nest. I watched it with much interest, as this was the first time I had seen a cormorant use its bill in climbing a tree. As it got safely up among the branches my gaze dropped to the water again and there, right at the spot from which the bird had started its climb, lay the broad, rough head of a gator that must have measured ten feet at least. He was not a dozen yards away—and I wanted him for a specimen. My rifle was over the hollow of my left arm. Slowly and cautiously as I could I began to work that gun around into a shooting position. "Nay, nay, Pauline," thought that gator, and he vanished, as he had come, without sound or apparent ruffling of the water. He was badly disappointed—and so was I.

What has impressed me most about these gators is their illimitable patience and inscrutability. What do they think about? And why do they think so? Patience? Why, Job was a nervous wreck compared with an alligator waiting for something to eat to turn up. If he don't get a meal to-day he may to-morrow. If not to-morrow, then the next day; or next week or the week after, at least. I never saw one in a hurry (except when chased) but one. He was after a young cormorant that was

SILVIA GRAY'S TEMPTATION
BY MARIE CHESTER.

The door of the shabby tenement was surrounded by children of all ages and sizes, from the little toddling girl of two, to the strapping boy of ten. In spite of the fact that they were often cold and hungry, they were a happy lot and their voices rang out in shrill laughter as they ran in and out in their play. The spring sunshine touched their shoulders and hair though the narrow alley called a street, and a poor scrawny plant which Mrs. Riley had managed to keep alive through the winter had put out a tiny bit of leaf.

Mrs. Riley had placed it on the window sill so that it might get the benefit of the narrow ribbon of sunlight, which just at noon shone down into the street.

Some distance down the street, a hand organ was grinding out a hackneyed and familiar tune and soon the whole "pub" to use the language of the tenements, started down the street to dance to the music.

Mrs. Gray sat in her dingy room on the top floor busily sewing. She was a delicate, rather refined looking woman dressed in shabby black and waded out over the roof of the tenement by which she was surrounded and sighed, then hearing the sound of the shrill voices of the children in the street below, sighed again.

As she arose to perform some household duty, she heard the sound of feet away down stairs. The steps grew slower as they reached her door, and then the door opened and a slip of a girl, little more than a child, entered.

"Oh, Silvia, did you get it? I do hope you did." "Mama I am so tired I can hardly talk, and these stairs have fairly taken my breath—just a minute please."

Mrs. Gray got a glass of water and gave it to the child, which somewhat revived her.

"Yes, mama, I got it and will start to work to-morrow morning at 5 o'clock. I am to get \$4.00 a week; will have to run on errands and deliver parcels, and oh, mama! just think of it! I am to go to the shops to buy ribbon and match silks. I hope it will be soon, for you know that one time we went into a shop what beautiful things we saw. I shall never forget them."

Mrs. Gray went over and kissed the child and said, "Silvia, I wish you did not have to go to work but could stay in school as you wish, but my child when I have paid the rent I shall have very little left and the waists I will have worked so hard to finish will bring but a pittance."

Mr. and Mrs. Gray, like many other foolish and shortsighted people, had been attracted to New York a few years before. They had owned a small house in a country town in Connecticut and lived very comfortably. But in an evil day, they had been persuaded to sell their home and move to New York. Nothing but ill luck had followed them. Mr. Gray fell ill and died and the money he had saved dwindled and here they were living in a miserable tenement amid a horde of dirty and undesirable people, and paying a sum for their wretched two rooms which would have been a small porch and a green vine running along the railing, and of sunshine there would have been plenty.

Their rooms were neat and clean as Mrs. Gray worked early and late to keep them so. The other dwellers in the tenement recognized that they were different and in some respects above them, and consequently hated them.

The next morning Silvia was up bright and early in anticipation of beginning her work as an errand girl for the dressmaking establishment of Madam Dubois. She kissed her mother good bye and ran down the stairs to the street. As usual the door was