

A STRANGE LITTLE EAST SIDE GIRL.

Why Did Maggie Gilbert Throw Herself Out of Her Bedroom Window at 369 First Avenue?

She Is a Dreamer, a Nomad, a Fragile, Delicate Bit of Humanity, Whom Nobody in the Work-a-Day World of the East Side Pretends to Understand.

Maggie Gilbert is a little dreamer, who lives away up in the top of a five-story tenement-house at No. 369 First Avenue.

She is the same little girl who, on Tuesday evening, in a fit of despair or in a spirit of adventure—no one knows quite which—threw herself out of her bedroom window, down on to the roof of the adjoining house.

She is an odd mix of humanity, this little nine-year-old Maggie Gilbert. Gossips in the tenement say that Maggie's stepmother punished her Tuesday evening, and that she jumped out of the window in desperation. But there is very slight foundation for such a story. Maggie Gilbert is a little child, who moves about always as if walking in a dream. And the matter-of-fact people in an east-side tenement, who battle day by day against heavy odds for their bread and beer, can't understand her, that is all.

She is a pretty thing, as fragile as a flower. Why she did not break her body into bits when she leaped from the window is a marvel. It is quite a fall to the roof of the next house. They picked her up almost unconscious. Very soon after she was found she became fully so. Then the doctors gave her medicine and she fell into a quiet sleep. When she awoke yesterday morning she was a trifle weak but otherwise was as whole as if she had never taken the jump. At noon

she was frolicking with the other children in the household.

A VERY PECULIAR LITTLE GIRL. Maggie is one of eight children. Tommy and Mamie are older than she and Hannah came next after Maggie's birth. Then there are three chubby, flaxen little fellows, and last year the baby came. All but Maggie romp about and laugh and play and scream together just like other children in an east side tenement. But Maggie is different. She is an accident in their midst. They call her "queer."

No one has ever been quite able to interpret her strange ways. She loves to wander out when the rest of the family, after a long day's work or play, are fast asleep, and watch the life of the east side as it moves and hurries and eddies along in the three broad avenues nearest the river.

Sometimes she romps with the other children. But often she leaves them to their play and ventures away to stroll up and down the streets alone. When she is in those moods she never talks much. And when her mother and father ask her what she is thinking about when she walks up and down the pavement all alone she never says. There is a side to this little east-side dreamer which she never shows to her brothers and sisters and which her father and mother can no more comprehend than they can Green.

Two days ago the child played truant. She goes to the public school in East Twenty-third street, but for a long time it has been Maggie's habit to leave her lessons suddenly when the vagrant mood had hold of her and wander away at her own sweet will. Sometimes she does not go to the school at all.

A NOBODY OF THE EAST SIDE. At other times, when school is out, instead of returning home with her companions she disappears. Supper is spread, but Maggie's little chair is empty. Sometimes it is 8, sometimes 9, sometimes it is 10 o'clock before she returns. Sometimes, too, she does not return at all, and her father and mother have had on several occasions to search the streets for her till midnight.

When they have found her she returns willingly enough, but they can never get her to explain her conduct. She closes her tiny mouth in a quietly determined manner and is deaf and dumb to all entreaty. When she has been found she has invariably been alone. She was hopping up and down the pavements, bathing herself in the glare of the gas lights and electric lamps, gazing into the shop windows, watching the passers-by; drinking in, like another "Petit Daniel," the glamour and music of a great city like she was drunk with it all.

THE BOWERY A FAINT LAND TO HER.

You may smile at the music and the glamour of Third Avenue and the thoroughfares lying between it and the East River. It is all paltry enough, to be sure. But you must remember that this little Maggie Gilbert had hardly ever been out of the east side, during the day, in her life. And at night she slept in a stifling inside room with three or four sisters lying beside her in the same bed.

What wonder that the Bowery by night was a sort of fairyland to her and by day the far-off squares and parks into which she stumbled became as dreamland?

Whether she strolled further away at times during her nocturnal rambles no one except Maggie herself knows. She never says. "She loves books and flowers and pictures and music. She, of course, has had little enough of all these things in her life, with seven brothers and sisters to demand their share of the week's earnings.

Perhaps she got far away enough some afternoon or evening to learn that all these beautiful things existed, if she could manage to walk long enough to find them.

At any rate her disappearance from home and school became more and more frequent. Her parents scolded her and tried to reason with her. Once her father whipped her. But nothing availed with the child. Tuesday afternoon she had played truant again. When Maggie's mother learned of it she scolded the girl and threatened to tell her father of her conduct. Maggie had eaten her supper, and at 9 o'clock, as was her custom, she left her mother, who was reading to the two older children, and went into the room where she slept.



WINDOW FROM WHICH MAGGIE JUMPED.

The flat which the Gilberts occupy is on the top, on the south side of the tenement. It has the regular east-side tenement-house arrangement. There is a room facing the street and one facing the court. Between these there are two more rooms. In most houses these two middle rooms are windowless and dark. The room where Maggie slept, however, was a full story above the adjoining tenement and had a window in one corner looking towards the South.

It was such a little window. It was only about three feet high and a foot and a half wide. In fact, it wasn't any bigger than the child who leaped out of it Tuesday evening. How she got out of it—for it only opened half-way—sprung, and made the leap down to the roof of No. 367, is as much a mystery as the little girl's whole life to her comrades. But do it, somehow, she did, and she cleared an alley way at least four feet in width which lay between the houses.

Two of Maggie's sisters were asleep in the big bed in the small room when she climbed

up to the window-sill. They didn't hear her pull up the sash, nor did they wake when she lay moaning on the tiles outside. The doors were open through into the room where Mrs. Gilbert sat reading, but the sound of her voice must have drowned the creaking of the window. No one in the back room heard that. But they heard the child moaning, and Mrs. Gilbert ran in to see what the trouble was. Two children were sound asleep on the pillows. Maggie, how-

ever, was not there, nor was she in the front room.

THEY FOUND HER ON THE ROOF. Mrs. Gilbert noticed the half-open window, and she looked out. She saw something white down on the roof outside.

She cried out: "Is that you, Maggie?"

"Yes'm," came back in a faint reply.

Mrs. Gilbert ran down the four flights of stairs and up into the next tenement. A tenant by the name of Armstrong had already heard the child groaning and had gone up to her assistance. He took up the fragile form in his arms and carried it downstairs. There Mrs. Gilbert met him.

The child was in her night-dress and her feet were bare. But she had put on her little cloak before she took the leap. When Armstrong found the child she was unconscious, but she became insensible very soon after she was taken into the house.

An ambulance was sent for immediately, but Mrs. Gilbert would not allow the little girl to be taken to the hospital. The patrolman on beat picked Maggie up and bore her to the Gilberts' flat. There they laid the child on the best bed and Dr. Holden was sent for.

He examined Maggie's body and found, as if by a miracle, that no bones had been broken by the fall. A sedative was given the child and she soon was peacefully asleep.

SHE LIES ON THE BED LIKE A WAX DOLL.

She was still asleep when a WORLD MAN called at the flat yesterday. She looked as delicate as a leaf, and her two tiny arms were folded above her head. That little head was one mass of golden hair, which was cut short, and her deep-blue eyes, which were repeated in every one of her brothers and sisters, were hidden. She looked like a wax doll, but there by one of the other children, and in no wise suggested as she slept there—hardly breathing it seemed—the upheaval that her strange short existence on earth must have undergone.

Mrs. Gilbert was sitting by the child as she was sleeping.

"I don't know why Maggie did it," she was saying to THE WORLD reporter. "She is such a queer little body. No, not I couldn't have been because I scolded her. I didn't scold her. I only told her that I would tell her father that she had run away again."

"And that was an old story to Maggie.

She has given us so much trouble by her strange ways. We can't make her out. Her father once was for putting her out to Father Prumgool's. She couldn't run away there. But I said: 'Oh, wait a little longer. The child is a bit queer now, but she will outgrow it.' And I think she will."

"I never laid a hand on her, nor have I on any of my husband's children. He had six when I married him, the youngest only a year old. Maggie has given us more trouble than them all. But she is quiet enough generally. If she would only stay at home like the rest!"

DIFFERENCE FROM ALL HER PLAYMATES.

"She is always wanting to do something different from her playmates," Mrs. Gilbert



LITTLE MAGGIE GILBERT.

went on. "She wants excitement and is always hankering after adventure. I think that is the reason she jumped out of the window. If she wanted to kill herself, why didn't she drop down in the alleyway instead of leaping over it? No, I think she meant to steal out again last night and roam the streets. Poor child, I don't know what she will do next."

The fact that Maggie had only a night-dress does in no way discomfit her mother's theory. For her father and mother have again and again hidden away her little shoes and stockings, but she would run out

just the same in her bare feet. One of her vagrant moods was strong upon her Tuesday, and she began by playing truant in the afternoon. When she was sent to bed the mood still held her, and she intended to clear the alley, gain the next roof and steal down through the next house out into the avenue.

Two months ago Maggie's parents found that she had been going about among their friends and borrowing money. Once it was 25 cents she got in this way; once it was 50 cents. Another day she obtained \$1. Then her father discovered what she had been doing and he whipped her. The child took her strapping without a word—without a murmur. But no endeavor could bring from her the motive for her wrongdoing.

It was discovered afterwards that the child had spent some of the money in candies; some of it in fancy colored prints; some of it went no one knows where.

And now the little golden-haired creature lies in her bed, saying nothing about her action, sleeping at times, and at times again playing with the babies. Thomas Gilbert is an honest, hard-working engineer. His wife is a stout, hearty, good-natured woman, who spends her days mending, cooking, washing and tending eight children, six of which came to her as a wedding gift. The parents work hard by day and sleep sound by night. Seven of their children go to school, eat three meals a day till they have become as sturdy and fat a little race as it would be possible to find in the whole east side, and these at night, like their father and mother, go to bed tired out, glad to get there.

AN ODD BIT OF HUMANITY.

But this odd little bit of humanity, who lies in the big bed in the front room there, she is different. Her brothers and sisters go to school; she dislikes the restraint and sighs to get away. They don't care much to go to the Church of the Epiphany every Sunday. But the little Maggie loves that, for she hears music there. When the others are asleep she is wide awake. When the boys and girls whom she knows are tumbling in rough sports she goes away by herself and dreams. What does she dream about?

They call her up in the tenement "Said" and "queer." No one seems to understand her there. Poor little Maggie Gilbert! There is no place for dreamers in a work-day world like the east side.