

# LEAPED FROM A FIVE-STORY ROOF.

Lizzie Gunther Drank to Excess Because She Could Not Find Work.

Her Body, Every Bone Broken, Was Found by a Policeman—A Child's Thoughtless Remark May Have Impelled Her to Kill Herself.

A shapeless mass lay on the sidewalk in front of the tall tenement at No. 419 East Thirteenth street, at a very early hour yesterday morning. The sun had not yet risen, and all the city thoroughfares were in "a deep gray mist," when Policeman Becker,

walking sleepy-eyed eastward, saw the queer-looking bundle on the ground and prodded it with his night stick.

There was no response, but the first thrust of the club made known to the officer that the heap was human. It lay on the

edge of the curb a ghastly, misshapen mound. To rap his club in a lively tattoo on the resounding sidewalk was the first thought of the officer, and in response to that signal there quickly appeared a second policeman, and between these two day-break patrolmen they discovered that the gruesome bundle on the sidewalk was the remains of a woman.

Every bone in the poor creature's frame was crushed and broken. It required but a moment's reflection on the part of the policemen to arrive at the conclusion that the woman had met death by falling from some considerable height. They looked upward. A five-story tenement was the building in front of which the dead woman lay. Not a window in the face of this edifice was open. The inmates were all asleep. It was discovered, however, that the door leading to the house was ajar. Nothing easier for any wail of the street who was anxious to end a disagreeable life than to enter the open door, climb the narrow stairs leading to the roof and plunge headlong down to the street below.

The policemen, thinking—but who can tell what policemen think—to solve the riddle, determined to arouse the household of No. 419. The janitor, Michael Weigand, a

tallor, came drowsily out in response to the rapping and identified the misshapen corpse as that of one Lizzie Gunther, a working woman, who several months ago had occupied apartments in the tenement over which he presides. She had not lived there recently. Of course she might have entered the open street door and climbed to the roof while everybody else in the house was sleeping and taken a header to the flagging below. As to this the janitor knew nothing. He was cool and indifferent. The body was thereupon removed to the nearest station-house and an investigation begun.

That her death ~~was~~ assumed as the result of a plunge from the roof of No. 419 was, however, pretty well established by the fact that the trap-door leading from the top flight to that roof was open. There were also footprints showing apparently that she had without hesitation ran down the slanting roof and leaped off. It was a frightful fall; a clear five stories to the cruel stones below.

Into the pockets of the dead woman the police delved for justification of their theory that it was a case of suicide. The search was not without reward. A crumpled letter, bearing no date, and written how long since

no one can tell, was found in the woman's dress. It was addressed to one Julius Hammel, was written in German and, when translated, said:

I give you my thanks for the care you have had for me. No doubt you have denied yourself many times on my account, but no one can know how I have suffered. If any one could know it all at least one kind heart would pity me. I know I have done wrong, but God will forgive. I am tired of life. Please write to my sister, Millie Helms, No. 37 Frederick Wilhelm street, Erfurt, Germany, and break the news gently to her. I wish very much that my little friend, Katie Fanta, Tim Curtis and Ella Wilson shall be at my funeral, also my dearly beloved and never-to-be-forgotten Mrs. McGrath, and Mrs. Frank, but not the Ellensbergs.

It is a fearful thing to do, but I have suffered much. The furniture in my room belongs to Mrs. McGrath, but the covers on the bed and other little things that belong to me, I wish them given to little Lillie Scharen. I owe Mrs. Asher 50 cents she lent me for newspapers. I also owe the same amount to Mrs. Schloppendorf. Please pay them. So God be with you.

This was all the message that the poor woman had left. In the dead of night she had entered unperceived the door of that vast tenement in which she had in happier days found a home, and had swept upstairs to the little trap-door leading to the roof.

No better place than that steep roof offered a sure ending to her unhappy life.

To trace the history of a lone woman in this big city and to discover the causes and motives that would lead that woman to self-slaughter is not ordinarily an easy task. There was, however, little difficulty in the case of poor Lizzie Gunther. At the bottom of all her troubles was an inordinate appetite for strong drink.

She came to this country about seven years ago from Berlin. She was skilled in the manufacture of worsted goods and was soon able to obtain a lucrative position. Two years ago she was forewoman of the Knickerbocker Knitting Mill, at No. 105 Franklin street, and was earning \$25 a week. She was a woman of violent prejudice and extremely unapproachable. The friends that she might have made were perforce but little more than casual acquaintances. She repelled intimacy, was exacting and even harsh to the girls under her and kept herself continuously within a shell of reserve.

One day, nearly a year ago, the factory on Franklin street over which she presided was destroyed by fire. The firm of H. Criss (her employer) went out of business in New York and removed to Boston. She had a contract under which she received her

wages regularly until Jan. 1 last, but she was idle, and, if all that is said may be believed, she became extremely despondent and took to drink. The Julius Hammel to whom her letter was written has been her best friend during the prosperous business career which was so ruthlessly ended by the fire that destroyed her employer's factory. To Mr. Hammel this strong-minded Berlin woman looked for the securing of a new position. She was unable to endure idleness and unable to comprehend the condition of affairs which makes it possible for men to succeed where women cannot.

Since Jan. 1 this German woman, only a little beyond thirty years of age, had been chafing at fate. That fire had burned her employer's factory in Franklin street was not her fault. She was conscious of the fact that she could manage a thousand girls. She was ambitious, energetic and proud and yet easily discouraged.

A peculiar nature, indeed, seems to have been that of this Berlin girl, and to the innocent remark of a little child is attributed by several of those who knew her best, it, indeed, anybody can be said to have known her even well, the cause of her horrible self-murder. She was stopping until Friday of last week at the home of

Mrs. Catharine Scharen, at No. 521 East Eleventh street. On that day she determined to move to the home of an older acquaintance on Twenty-fifth street.

As she was packing her trunks preparatory to departure little Lillie Scharen entered her room and said: "So you're away. You always promised you'd give me something, but you never gave me anything. I don't believe you're any good."

It was only a child's talk, a child who had never been taught manners, but it seemed to cut to the heart of this lonely German working woman.

"I'll send you a present, Tillie," said she. And then she removed her things to the Twenty-fifth street home, but it is not known that she ever spent a night there. She was too easily discouraged. At the first misadventure her spirits forsook her, but that she remembered the words of the little Scharen child and that she was of a unusually sensitive nature is made manifest by the remembrance of that child with a gift in her last will and testament.

To find death in the darkness of the night through a plunge from the roof of a five-story building is horrible and in the case of a woman of Lizzie Gunther's capability it is pitiful in the extreme.