

IN SILKEN ATTIRE

By Augustus Goodrich Sherwin  
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Rags—a room full of them, a warehouse given to shreds, patches, fragments, to strips of rotted woolen lengths, thin and faded cotton tatters. Rags once white, now spotted and soiled. Discarded silks from my lady's dressing room, homespun weaves that bore the mark of rain and grime, and wear and tear.

And amid the biggest heap of the fragments to be sorted plodded and sang as pure and bright a spirit as cloister or palace might contain. They called her Floribel. Where she came from, whom her father and mother, no one seemed to know except old Jacobs, the owner of the rag shop.

Once his wife had given it out that they had reared her from a child, had taken her from an orphan asylum. They were coarse, common people at the rag shop, but even in that atmosphere of rags Floribel grew like a beautiful fly.

She would sing when alone like a lark, but never when Madam Jacobs was about. Floribel was in deep dread of the lynxlike, tigerish-eyed old woman. Not that the madam mistreated her, except to keep her at work twelve hours a day, but because she shrank from the inharmonious nature of the woman. Madam gripped at the heaps of rags in a way that seemed to tell that so forcefully would she tear at human hearts if she could find gold among them.

Once Floribel had found a diamond ring in an old glove. When she gave it to the madam the selfish, avaricious glee of her task mistress fairly appalled her. She gloated over it, she kissed it, she hastened to convert it into money.

After that the probing eager eyes of the old woman terrified Floribel. She looked out for treasure, for pockets, the rag woman re-

sembled some famished ferret on the scent of blood.

Then one day "The Hero" came into the lonely life of the beautiful isolated girl. A young man entered the place and asked for its proprietor. Old Jacobs was absent on a rag buying trip. The madame was also absent but would return soon. In awe of the rich, tasteful attire of the unfamiliar caller, fascinated with his handsome face, the courtesy of the true gentleman that he bestowed



She Gloated Over It.

upon her, as in a dream Floribel dusted off the one rickety chair in the place and resumed her work.

He sat looking at her with more than common interest. Her pure, innocent face deeply attracted him. He influenced the shy eyes to seek his own, he led her to talk with him. Soon he had her simple story.

"It is no place for you, this," he said, and he took a card from his pocket and wrote upon it. "I am giv-