

BEACON LIGHTS.

THE GIPSY'S MISSION.

BY EMILIE SEARCHFIELD.

"Little deeds are like little seeds."

IT is, as you may perhaps know, a custom in some of the midland counties of England, to celebrate as a village feast the anniversary of the day upon which their churches have been completed, or rather, I would say, of the day set apart in memory of the saint to which each church has been dedicated. Of the good or bad attending such customs, I leave those to judge who perhaps are well acquainted with the riotous mirth and drunkenness attending such times; but as a rule, I may say that in these festivals gipsies take a pro-

face full of life and resolution. Her countenance was fine, but of the true gipsy type. Only looking upon her, one wondered whether or not in a few years she would be like to those palsied, toothless creatures, who, seeming to glory in their very decay, prey upon the soft and young by foretelling a future of which they really know no more than the very stones in the street.

Well, night swept on, and then came—I had well-nigh said the quiet Sabbath; but it was far from that. Idle folks stood about upon the village green, talking, laughing, and making surmises as to the morrow's sports; but although many of the gipsies were among them, the beautiful face was not seen—and why? The young life had been almost stricken down. Death seemed hovering very, very near, and there upon a bed of straw she lay, with only the canvas tent betwixt her and the June sun. In vain were the charms of the "seventh



"So she watched and waited."

minent part, both in the helping on of sports and in making large gains, which are used by them in a wicked, improvident way.

It was the Saturday before the feast in a village very near to Newbury, in Berkshire, and here and there groups of little children, aye, and men and women too, were collected to see the gipsies arrive. Caravan after caravan slowly passed, for the poor horses, which were by no means the best-fed in the world, seemed weary enough with their day's march. Now and then a face peered out through the dingy curtains which covered the windows of the vehicles, and many were the remarks passed by those standing near, as to whom they belonged. One, however, was quite new to them. It was that of a young girl, a mere child as it were, had not the life she led lent a look of care to her features. The village folk said she was beautiful, but they were wrong—hers was but a

daughter of a seventh daughter"; in vain were all their herbs and embrocations; and one, the likeliest of all their band of youths, lay on the earth close by the side of her rude pallet, declaring that if Nannette died he would not live long. Such things as suicides were not unknown amongst them, so passionate were they; and as Robin was their leader in all deeds of daring, the elders watched him closely to see that he did not go away in his great grief, and commit the wrong he threatened.

The sun was still scorching, but the rays were slanting, and ere long evening would come with its welcome coolness. Little children were passing on their way home from school, and one party, full of gladness, which only singing could express, raised their tiny voices in song. It was but the old familiar hymn—

"Here we suffer grief and pain," etc.;