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and the sun shone, and a snow-bird' was chirping outside of the door. She noticed how the tea-kettle hummed, and how well the new curtain, with the castle and waterfall on it, fitted the window. She thought that she would scour the closet at night, and surprise father by finishing those list slippers. She kissed him when she had tied on the red hood, and said good-bye to Dick, and told them just where to find the squash pie for dinner.

When she had closed the twisted gate, and taken a step or two upon the snow, she came thoughtfully back. Her father was on his bench, mending one of Meg Match's shoes. She pushed it gently out of his hands, sat down upon his lap, and stroked the shaggy hair away from his forehead.

"Father!"  
"Well, what now, Sene?—what now?"

"Sometimes I believe I've forgotten you a bit, you know. I think we're going to be happier after this. That's all."

She went out again singing, and he heard the gate shut again with a click.

Sene was a little dizzy that morning—the constant palpitation of the floors always made her dizzy after a wakeful night—and so her colored cotton threads danced out of place and troubled her.

Del Ivory, working beside her, said, "How the mill shakes! What's going on?"

"It's the new machinery they're h'isting in," observed the overseer, carelessly. "Great improvement, but heavy, very heavy; they calculate on getting it all into place to-day; you'd better be tending to your frame, Miss Ivory."

As the day wore on, the quiet of Asenath's morning deepened. Round and round with the pulleys over her head she wound her thoughts of Dick. In and out with her black and dun-colored threads she spun her future. Pretty Del, just behind her, was twisting a pattern like a rainbow. She noticed this and smiled.

"Never mind, she thought, 'I guess God knows.'"

Was He ready "to bless her, and show her how"? She wondered. If, indeed, it were best that she should never be Dick's wife, it seemed to her that He would help her about it. She had been a coward last night; her blood leaped in her veins with shame at the memory of it. Did he understand? Did He not know how she loved Dick, and how hard it was to lose him?

However that might be, she began to feel at rest about herself. A curious apathy about means and ways and decisions took possession of her. A bounding sense that a way of escape was provided from all her troubles, such as she had when her mother died, came upon her.

Years before, an unknown workman in South Boston, casting an iron pillar upon its core, had suffered it to "float" a little, a very little more, till the thin, unequal side cooled to the measure of an eighth of an inch. That workman had provided Asenath's way of escape.

She went out at noon with her luncheon, and found a place upon the stairs, away from the rest, and sat there awhile, with her eyes upon the river, thinking. She could not help wondering a little, after all, why God need to have made her so unlike the rest of his fair handiwork. Del came bounding by, and nodded at her carelessly. Two young Irish girls, sisters—the beauties of the mill—magnificently colored creatures—were singing a little love-song together, while they tied on their hats to go home.

"There are such pretty things in the world," thought poor Sene.

Did anybody speak to her after the girls were gone? Into her heart these words fell suddenly, "He hath no form nor comeliness. His visage was so marred more than any man."

They clung to her fancy all the afternoon. She liked the sound of them. She wove them in with her black and dun-colored threads.

The wind began at last to blow up the staircases, and in at the cracks;

the melted drifts out under the walls to harden; the sun dipped above the dam; the mill dimmed slowly; shadows crept down between the frames.

"It's time for lights," said Meg Match, and swore a little at her spoils.

Sene, in the pauses of her thinking, heard snatches of the girls' talk.

"Going to ask out to-morrow, Meg?"

"Guess so, yes; me and Bob Smith, we thought we'd go to Boston, and come up in the theatre train."

"Del Ivory, I want the pattern of your zouave."

"Did I go to church? No, you don't catch me! If I slave all week, I'll do what I please on Sunday."

"Hush-sh! There's the boss looking over here!"

"Kathleen Donnavon be still with your ghost stories. There's one thing in the world I never will hear about, and that's dead people."

"Del, said Sene, 'I think to-morrow—'"

She stopped. Something strange had happened to her frame; it jarred, buzzed, snapped; the threads untwisted and flew out of place.

"Curious!" she said, and looked up.

Looked up to see her overseer turn wildly, clap his hands to his head, and fall; to hear a shriek from Del that froze her blood; to see the solid ceiling gape above her; to see the walls and windows stagger; to see iron pillars reel, and vast machinery throw up its helpless giant arms, and a tangle of human faces blanch and writhe!

She sprang as the floor sunk. As pillar after pillar gave way, she bounded up an inclined plane, with the gulf yawning after her. It gained upon her, leaped at her, caught her; beyond were the stairs and an open door; she threw out her arms, and struggled on with hands and knees, tripped in the gearing, and saw, as she fell, a square, oaken beam above her yield and crash; it was of a fresh red color; she dimly wondered why—as she felt her hands slip, her knees slide, support, time, place and reason go utterly out.

"At ten minutes before five, on Tuesday, the tenth of January, the Pemberton Mill, all hands being at the time on duty, fell to the ground."

So the record flashed over the telegraph wires, sprang into large type in the newspapers, passed from lip to lip, a nine days' wonder, gave place to the successful candidate, and the muttering South, and was forgotten.

Who shall say, what it was to the seven hundred and fifty souls who were buried in the ruins? What to the eighty-eight who died that death of exquisite agony? What to the wrecks of men and women who endure unto this day a life that is worse than death? What to the architect and engineer who, when the fatal pillars were first delivered to them for inspection, had found one broken under their eyes, yet accepted the contract, and built with them a mill whose thin walls and wide, unsupported stretches could never keep their place unaided?

One that we love may go to the battleground, and we are ready for the worst; we have said our good-byes; our hearts wait and pray; it is his life, not his death, which is the surprise. But that he should go out to his safe, daily, commonplace occupations, unnoticed and uncaressed—scolded a little, perhaps, because he leaves the door open, and tells us how cross we are this morning; and they bring him up the steps by-and-bye a mangled mass of death and horror—that is hard.

Old Martyn working at Meg Match's shoes—she was never to wear those shoes, poor Meg!—heard, at ten minutes before five, what he thought to be the rumble of an earthquake under his very feet, and stood with bated breath, waiting for the crash. As nothing further appeared to happen, he took his stick and limped out into the street.

A vast crowd surged through it from end to end. Women with white lips were counting the mills—Pacific, Atlantic, Washington—Pemberton? Where was Pemberton?

Where Pemberton had blazed with its lamps last night, and hummed with its iron lips this noon, a cloud of dust,



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### OUR GREAT OFFER

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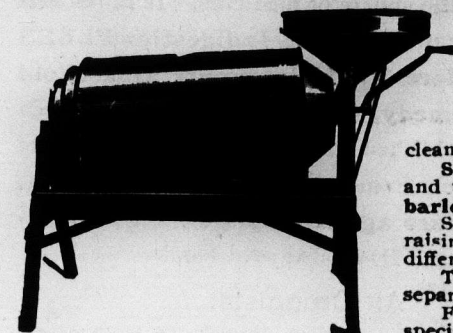
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