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house; to creep into bed and lie there trying not to think, and wishing that so she might creep into her grave—this not for one winter, but for all the winters—how should you like it, you young girls, with whom time runs like a story?

The very fact that her employers dealt honorably by her; that she was fairly paid, and promptly, for her wearing toil; that the limit of endurance was consulted in the temperature of the room, and her need of rest in an occasional holiday—perhaps, after all, in the mood she was in, did not make this factory life more easy. She would have found it rather a relief to have somebody to complain of—wherein she was like the rest of us, I fancy.

But at last there came a day—it chanced to be the ninth of January—when Asenath went away alone at noon, and sat where Merrimack sung his songs to her. She hid her face upon her knees, and listened, and thought her own thoughts, till they and the slow torment of the winter seemed greater than she could bear. So, passing her hands confusedly over her forehead, she said at last aloud, "That's what God means, Asenath Martyn!" and went back to work with a purpose in her eyes.

She "asked out" a little earlier than usual, and went slowly home. Dick was there before her; he had been taking a half holiday. He had made the tea and toasted the bread for a little surprise. He came up and said, "Why, Sene, your hands are cold!" and warmed them for her in his own.

After tea she asked him, would he walk out with her for a little while? and he in wonder went. The streets were brightly lighted, and the moon was up. The ice cracked crisp under their feet. Sleighs, with two riders in each, shot merrily by. People were laughing in groups before the shop windows. In the glare of a jeweler's counter somebody was buying a wedding ring and a girl with red cheeks was looking hard the other way.

"Let's get away," said Asenath—"get away from here!"

They chose by tacit consent that favorite road of hers over the eastern bridge. Their steps had a hollow, lonely ring on the frosted wood; she was glad when the softness of the snow in the road received them. She looked back once at the water, wrinkled into thin ice on the edge for a foot or two, then open and black and still.

"What are you doing?" asked Dick. She said that she was wondering how cold it was, and Dick laughed at her. They strolled on in silence for perhaps a mile of the desolate road.

"Well, this is social!" said Dick at length; "how much farther do you want to go? I believe you'd walk to Reading if nobody stopped you!"

She was taking slow, regular steps like an automation, and looking straight before her.

"How much farther? Oh!" She stopped and looked about her.

A wide young forest spread away at their feet, to the right and to the left. There was ice on the tiny oaks and miniature pines; it glittered sharply under the moon; the light upon the snow was blue; cold roads wound away through it, deserted; little piles of dead leaves shivered; a fine keen spray ran along the tops of the drifts; inky shadows lurked and dodged about the undergrowth; in the broad spaces the snow glared; the lighted mills, a zone of fire, blazed from east to west; the skies were bare, and the wind was up, and Merrimack in the distance chanted solemnly.

They were alone there—they two and God.

"Dick," said Asenath, "this is a dreadful place! Take me home."

But when he would have turned, she held him back with a sudden cry, and stood still.

"I meant to tell you—I meant to say—Dick! I was going to say—"

But she did not say it. She opened her lips to speak once and again, but no sound came from them.

"Sene! why Sene, what ails you?"

He turned and took her in his arms; he hid the sky and the snow from her

sight; she felt his breath upon her hair.

"Poor Sene!"

He kissed her, feeling sorry for her unknown trouble. She struggled at his touch. He kissed her again. She broke from him, and away with a great bound upon the snow. She stood out against the sky, panting hard like a hunted thing.

"You make it so hard! You've no right to make it so hard! It ain't as if you loved me, Dick! I know I'm not like other girls! Go home and let me be!"

But Dick drew her arm through his, and led her gravely away. "I like you well enough, Asenath," he said, with that motherly pity in his eyes; "I've always liked you. So don't let us have any more of this."

So Asenath said nothing more.

The sleek black river beckoned to her across the snow as they went home. A thought came to her as she passed the bridge—it is a curious study what wicked thoughts will come to good people!—she found herself considering the advisability of leaping the low brown parapet; and if it would not be like Dick to go over after her; if there would be a chance for them, even should he swim from the banks; how soon the icy current would paralyze him; how sweet it would be to chill to death there in his arms; how all this wavering and pain would be over; how Del would look when they dragged them out down below the machine shop!

"Sene, are you cold?" asked puzzled Dick. She was warmly wrapped in her little squirrel furs; but he felt her quivering upon her arm, like one in aague, all the way home.

About eleven o'clock that night her father waked from an exciting dream concerning the best method of blacking patent-leather; Sene stood beside his bed with her gray shawl thrown over her night-dress.

"Father, suppose sometime there should be only you and me—"

"Well, well, Sene," said the old man sleepily—"very well."

"I'd try to be a good girl! Could you love me enough to make up?"

He told her indistinctly that she always was a good girl; she never had a whipping from the day her mother died. She turned away impatiently; then cried out and fell upon her knees.

"Father, father! I'm in a great trouble. I haven't got any mother, any friend, anybody. Nobody helps me! Nobody knows. I've been thinking such things—oh, such wicked things—in my room! Then I got afraid of myself. You're good. You love me. I want you to put your hand on my head, and say, 'God bless you, child, and show you how!'"

Bewildered, he put his hand upon her unbound hair, and said: "God bless you, child, and show you how!"

Asenath looked at the old withered hand a moment, as it lay beside her on the bed, kissed it, and went away.

There was a scarlet sunrise the next morning. A pale pink flush stole through a hole in the curtain, and fell across Asenath's sleeping face, and lay there like a crown. It woke her, and she threw on her dress; and sat down for a while on the window-sill, to watch the coming-on of the day.

The silent city steeped and bathed itself in rose-tints; the river ran red, and the snow crimsoned on the distant New Hampshire hills; Pemberton, mute and cold, frowned across the disk of the climbing sun, and dripped, as she had seen it drip before, with blood.

The day broke softly, the snow melted, the wind blew warm from the river. The factory bell chimed cheerily, and a few sleepers, in safe, luxurious beds, were awakened by hearing the girls sing on their way to work.

Asenath came down with a quiet face. In her communing with the sunrise helpful things had been spoken to her. Somehow, she knew not how, the peace of day was creeping into her heart. For some reason, she knew not why, the torment and unrest of the night were gone. There was a future to be settled, but she would not trouble herself about that just now. There was breakfast to get;

and the sun was chirping. She noticed med, and how with the castle fitted the wind she would surprise f. list slippers. she had tied said good-bye just where to dinner.

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