

noon now, and she had to leave on the morning train with Aunt Margaret. She would not see him then, and she had wronged him so! If she could only tell him before she went away! Then—she shuddered at the thought—he was in danger. What if she should never see him again!

An hour later, the door of the Martin cottage opened noiselessly, a woman's figure stole out through the hush of the coming day. Once only her heart failed her; it was while standing there at the opening of the mine. The air was full of the humid freshness of morn; the little lake across the railway gently rocked the last stars that lay cradled yet a moment in its bosom, then glimmered faintly, and were gone. The white disc of the moon was drifting away yonder among the ragged tree-tops, and all along the pearly east outspread the crimson dawn. She turned and looked down the yawning abyss beside her, two thousand five hundred feet of slanting blackness to descend. The hour for changing hands was past; there was no way to descend but by walking (for Joggins has an incline road instead of the usual shaft). But her own father had walked down, and she was strong and brave.

She hesitated but a moment, then lighted the tiny miner's lamp she had brought, and turned down the incline. The greyish light thickened around her at every step, until it was all black ahead, thick, measureless black, impenetrable. Sometimes she fancied she saw tiny stars twinkle thousands of feet below, but she closed her eyes a moment, and they were gone.

S-z-z!

It was the empty coal-boxes dashing past her on the incline railway. She must keep close to the damp walls, for to get on the track meant death. The lowness of the beams overhead made it impossible, too, for her to straighten up to her full height, and the way was steep and uneven, so steep some places that she almost lost her balance, and had to clutch at the beams above. Now a little veined stream in the rocks over the roadway came dribbling playfully on her head and face, then there was the heavy roar of the great boxes of coal being pulled up; again the gush of waters, spouting from the rocks at her feet. She paused once for breath, then down again, down,

down, down, into the darkness and the silence. The light of day shone like a bright copper coin far up the slope behind, or rather, like a tiny circle cut from a waning moon. Then she looked back again, and it was gone, and she knew she was near the bottom of the descent.

Level ground at last! There were the big curtains that shut off the first passages, and little "Nickey," as they called him, asleep in his place. His father had been killed there, and ever since he had been earning a few pennies by lifting the curtain for visitors, with his cheery, "Pay yer footin'!"

"Nickey, wake up, my dear child, please."

And she slipped a shining quarter into his hand that made him open his blinking eyes more widely than any amount of coaxing could have done.

"See, here, Nickey, you go down to the place where they're fixin' those shaky props, and tell John Payson there's some one wants to see him here. Mind, don't let the others know who it is."

She passed under the heavy curtains into the air that almost stifles at first with its weight and heat, then sauntered down to where she could see the miners, working down a distant passage, some breaking the coal with their picks, some loading it into the cars, by the light of the little lamps that burned in their cap-peaks. All was still, save for the distant thud of the engine in the pump-room, and the rush of subterranean waters being pumped away to an outlet on the Fundy coast. Then a single light approached her.

"Jessie!" exclaimed a surprised voice.

But she drooped her face with a blush of embarrassment.

"What is it, Jessie? Anything happened to Fred?" He was pale with excitement.

"Nothing. No, I—I just wanted to tell you I was sorry, Jack. I couldn't go away without, and I was afraid something would happen you. I am sorry, Jack. Don't you believe me?"

"Do you really mean it, Jessie?"

"Yes, Jack, dear. I'm not worthy of you, but I'll try to be, and if—"

"Hush, dear! Oh, Jessie, you've made me the happiest man—but how did you get here at this hour?"

"Walked."

"Walked! Not down the incline!"