

Asenath's disappearance to the snow, indeed! But this was never allowed to reach the ears of honest Farmer Fryer.

They called in to see baby on their way, and to ask to have her home for the afternoon to let Mrs. Vicars get to church. The parson did remember the family in great sorrow when he came to the Litany; and touched, too, in his sermon on the melancholy event that had occupied the thoughts of all the parish during the week. He told his people how right it was to mourn with them that mourn, and said we were all so much the more ready, as a rule, to rejoice with the rejoicing, than to sympathise with the sorrowing. And he ended his funeral sermon with a few words of praise to Asenath's memory.

Sadder, more full of the reality of his loss, of the reasonableness of giving up his lingering hopes that he indulged in all the week, Fryer hurried his little ones home. Mounting the hill they saw how fast the snow had gone since early morning; they noted the doctor from Ryme riding across country to the hamlet; they saw Farmer Miller's gig being led down their own lane by a lad. Mr. Miller had not been at church: he, who never missed except the Sunday he spent in Dorchester at fair time once a-year!

'We'll call for baby as we go by, father,' said thoughtful little Susan, drawing no conclusions in her young mind from what she saw in the distance.

For all answer Fryer loosed her hand, and with something like a groan pushed through the hedge, and flew rather than ran across the fallow the shortest way to the Mill-farm. When he reached the house three women had possession, and would have kept him downstairs by main force, but he hurried on upstairs, breathing hard like some hunted animal. The doctor met him on the top step and took him with little ceremony into the children's sleeping-room.

'Tell me, sir! tell me!' he gasped hoarsely and breathlessly. 'It is the thaw! the thaw! Let me see my poor wife; she was my good Asie but a week ago?' And the tears pent up for many days came all unrestrained.

'Be comforted, my good sir,' said the doctor, with a smile that would have been a laugh, save for respect to a man's tears. 'It might have been worse.' And with his pocket-knife he cut the knot that tied the crape on Fryer's hat.

The gentle Asenath was a living wonder for many a day to all around. Her own account of herself was simply given.

The cold grew intense after she left the shelter of the hamlet, the storm grew fiercer, till, fancying it would soon spend itself, she crept into the hedge-side behind the hollowed bole of an old oak-tree, sheltering herself as she thought for a few minutes. Then came sleepiness, finally unconsciousness. Asenath was snug enough as far as being entirely covered up was concerned. The drift completely closed in above her, and then froze on the outside. She remembered waking twice and reaching eggs from the basket on her lap, sucking them, and falling off to sleep again. At her last waking the early Sunday bells were pealing merrily, a stream of cold water was running down her back, and she, with her waning strength gathered to a last effort by despair, began to fight about her prison, and raised stifled cries for help. She could hear passing travellers on the road; then the early