

romance of life that ever came near her, to brighten the dull drab of every day, was contained in the 'awful' nice stories devoured in every spare moment left her in the busy caravansera of her aunt Samantha Hopkins.

The rain patters against the glass; the twilight deepens. Jemima Ann has to strain her eyes to catch the last entrancing sentences of chapter five. The ankles that scurry past are muddy, the skirts bedraggled. Jemima Ann wishes they were fewer; they come between her and the last bleak rays of light. A melancholy autumnal wind rises, and blows some whirling dead leaves down the area: the gutter just outside swells to a miniature torrent, and has quite the romantic roar of a small river, Jemima Ann pensively thinks. Even she can read no more. She lays down her tattered book with a deep sigh of regret, props her elbows on her knees, sinks her chin in her palms, and gazes sentimentally upward at the greenish casement. It is nearly time to go and light the gas in the front-hall and dining-room, she opines. The men will be here directly, all shouting out together for warm water and more soap, and another towel, and—be dashed to you! Then there is cold corned-beef to be cut up for supper, and bread cut in great slices from four huge home-made loaves, and the stewed apples to be got out, and the tea put to draw, and after that to be poured, and after that, and far into the weary watches of the night, dishes to be washed, and the table reset for to-morrow's breakfast.

Jemima Ann sighs again, and this time it is not for the patrician sorrows of the lovely Duchess Isoline. In a general way she has not much time for melancholy musings. The life of Mrs. Hopkins' 'help' does not hold many gaps for reflection. It is a breathless, dizzying round and rush—one long 'demonition grind,' from week's end to week's end. And perhaps it is best that it should be so; else even Jemima Ann, patient, plodding, strong-arm, stout of heart, sweet of temper, willing of mind, might go slowly melancholy mad.

'It would be awful pleasant to be like they are in stories,' muses Jemima Ann, still blinking upward at the gray squares of blurred light, 'and have azure eyes, and golden tresses, and wear white Swiss and sweeping silks all the year round, and have lovely guardsmen and dukes and things, to gaze at a person passionately, and lift a person's hand to their lips.' Jemima Ann lifts one of her own, a red right hand, at this point, and surveys it. It is not particularly clean; it has no nails to speak of; it is nearly as

large, and altogether as hard, as that of any of the foundry 'hands'; and she sighs a third sigh, deepest and dolefullest of all. There are hands and hands; the impossibility of any mortal man, in his senses, ever wanting to lift this hand to his lips, comes well home to her in this hour. The favourite 'gulf' of her novel lies between her and such airy, fairy beings as the Duchess Isoline. And yet Jemima Ann fairly revels in the British aristocracy. Nothing less than a baronet can content her. No heroine under the rank of 'my lady' can greatly interest her. Pictures of ordinary every-day life, of ordinary every-day people, pall upon the highly-seasoned palate of Jemima Ann. Her own life is so utterly unlovely, so grinding in its sordid ugliness, that she will have no reflection of it in her favourite literature. Dickens fails to interest her. His men and women talk and act, and are but as shadowy reflections of those she meets every day.

'Nothing Dickens ever wrote,' says Jemima Ann, with conviction, 'is to be named in the same day with the 'Doom of the Duchess,' or 'The Belle of Belgravia.'

The darkness deepens, the rain falls, the wind of the autumn night sighs outside. Through the gusty gloamings a shrieking whistle suddenly pierces, and Jemima Ann springs to her feet, as if shot. The six o'clock whistle! The moments for dreaming are at an end. Life, at its ugliest, grimmest, most practical, is here. The men will be home for supper in five minutes.

'Jim!' cries a breathless voice. It is a woman's voice, sharp, thin, eager. There is a swish of woman's petticoats down the dark stairs, a bounce into the kitchen, then an angry exclamation: 'You Jim, are you here? What are you foolin' at now, and it blind man's holiday all over the house!'

'I'm a lightin' up, Aunt Samanthy,' responds Jemima Ann, placidly; 'you know you don't like the gas a flarin' a minute before it's wanted, and the whistle's only just blown.'

'I'm blowed myself,' says Aunt Samanthya—not meaning to be funny, merely stating a fact; 'and clean out o' breath. I've run every step of the way here from—. Jemima Ann, what d'ye think? They want me to take in a woman.'

'Do they?' says Jemima Ann. The gas is lit by this time, and flares out over the untidy kitchen and the two women. 'I wouldn't, if I was you. Who is she?'

'Rogers has her,' says Mrs. Hopkins, vaguely. 'She's with the rest at the hotel; but there ain't no room for her there. Rogers is full himself, and he wants me to