

always throb, and her back would ache. People would always say, "Look at that girl!"

"Can you direct me to —" She looked up; she had been sitting on the door-steps with her face in her hands. Dick stood there with his hat off. He forgot that he was to enquire the way to Newbury Street, when he saw the tears on her shrunken cheeks. Dick could never bear to see a woman suffer.

"I wouldn't cry," he said, simply, sitting down beside her. Telling a girl not to cry is an infallible recipe for keeping her at it. What could the child do, but sob as if her heart would break? Of course he had the whole story in ten minutes, she his in another ten. It was common and short enough—a "Down-East" boy, fresh from his father's farm, hunting for work and board—a bit homesick here in the strange, unhomelike city, it might be, and glad of someone to say so to.

What more natural than that, when her father came out and was pleased with the lad, there should be no more talk of Newbury Street; that the little yellow house should become his home; that he should swing the fantastic gate, and plant the nasturtiums; that his life should grow to be one with hers and the old man's, his future and theirs unite unconsciously?

She remembered—it was not exactly pleasant, somehow, to remember it to-night—just the look of his face when they came into the house that summer evening, and he for the first time saw what she was, her cape having fallen off, in the full lamplight. His kindly blue eyes widened with shocked surprise, and fell; when he raised them, a pity like a mother's had crept into them; it broadened and brightened as time slid by, but it never left them.

So you see, after that, life unfolded in a burst of little surprises for Asenath. If she came home very tired, some one said, "I am sorry." If she wore a pink ribbon, she heard a whisper, "It suits you." If she sang a little song, she knew that somebody listened.

"I didn't know the world was like this!" cried the girl.

After a time there came a night that he chanced to be out late—they had planned an arithmetic lesson together, which he had forgotten—and she sat grieving by the kitchen fire.

"You missed me so much then?" he said regretfully, standing with his hand upon the back of her chair. She was trying to shell some corn; she dropped the pan, and the yellow kernels rolled away on the floor.

"What should I have, if I didn't have you?" she said, and caught her breath.

The young man paced to the window and back again. The firelight touched her shoulders, and the sad, white scar.

"You shall have me always, Asenath," he made answer. He took her face within his hands and kissed it; and so they shelled the corn together, and nothing more was said about it.

He had spoken this last spring of her marriage; but the girl, like all girls, was shyly silent and he had not urged it.

Asenath started from her pleasant dreaming just as the oriflamme was turning into gray, suddenly conscious that she was not alone. Below her, quite on the brink of the water, a girl was sitting—a girl with a bright plaid shawl, and a nodding red feather in her hat. Her head was bent, and her hair fell against a profile cut in pink-and-white.

"Del is too pretty to be here alone so late," thought Asenath, smiling tenderly. Good-natured Del was kind to her in a certain way, and she rather loved the girl. She rose to speak to her, but concluded on a second glance through the aspens, that Miss Ivory was quite able to take care of herself.

Del was sitting on an old log that jutted into the stream, dabbling in the water with the tips of her feet. (Had she lived on The Avenue, she could not have been more particular about her shoemaker.) Someone—it was too dark to see distinctly—stood beside her, his eyes upon her face. Attitudes translate themselves. Asenath could hear nothing, but she needed to hear

nothing, to know how the young fellow's eyes drank in the coquettish picture. Besides, it was an old story. Del counted her rejected lovers by the score.

"It's no wonder," she thought in her honest way, standing still to watch them with a sense of puzzled pleasure much like that with which she watched the print-windows—"it's no wonder they love her. I'd love her if I was a man; so pretty! so pretty! She's just good for nothing, Del is—would let the kitchen fire go out, and wouldn't mend the baby's aprons; but I'd love her all the same; marry her, probably, and be sorry all my life."

Pretty Del! Poor Del! Asenath wondered whether she wished that she were like her; she could not quite make out; it would be pleasant to sit on a log and look like that; it would be more pleasant to be watched as Del was watched just now; it struck her suddenly that Dick had never looked like that at her.

The hum of their voices ceased while she stood there with her eyes upon them; Del turned her head away with a sudden movement, and the young man left her, apparently without bow or farewell, sprang up the bank at a bound, and crushed the undergrowth with quick, uneasy strides.

Asenath, with some vague idea that it would not be honorable to see his face—poor fellow!—sprang back into the aspens and the shadow.

He towered tall in the twilight as he passed her—he was so near that she might have touched him—and a dull, umber gleam, the last of the sunset, struck him from the west.

Struck it out into her sight—the haggard, struggling face—Richard Cross's face.

Of course you knew it from the beginning, but remember that the girl did not. She might have known it perhaps, but she did not.

Asenath stood up, sat down again. She had a distinct consciousness, for the moment, of seeing herself crouched down there under the aspens and the shadow, a humpbacked white creature, with distorted face and wide eyes. She remembered a picture she had somewhere seen of a little chattering goblin in a graveyard, and was struck with the resemblance. Distinctly, too, she heard herself saying, with a laugh, she thought, "I might have known it, I might have known."

Then the blood came through her heart with a hot rush, and she saw Del on the log, smoothing the red feather of her hat. She heard a man's step, too, that rang over the bridge, passed the toll-house, grew faint, grew fainter, and died in the sand by the Everett Mill.

Richard's face! Richard's face! looking—God help her!—as it had never looked at her; struggling—God pity him!—as it had never struggled for her.

She shut her hands into each other, and sat still a little while. A faint hope came to her then perhaps, after all; her face lightened gravely, and she crept down the bank to Del.

"I won't be a fool," she said. "I'll make sure—I'll make as sure as death."

"Well, where did you drop from, Sene?" said Del, with a guilty start. "From over the bridge, to be sure. Did you think I swam, or flew, or blew?"

"You came on me so sudden," said Del, petulantly; "you nearly frightened the wits out of me. You didn't meet anybody on the bridge?" with a quick look.

"Let me see." Asenath considered gravely. "There was one small boy making faces, and two—no, three—dogs, I believe; that was all."

"Oh!" Del looked relieved, but fell silent. "You're sober, Del. Been sending off a lover, as usual?"

"I don't know anything about it's being usual," answered Del, in an aggrieved, coquettish way, "but there's been somebody here that liked me well enough."

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