

The Rockwood Review.

steam of welcome. Elton tramped through the sitting room. An inspiration came to him.

"It needs a bed to lay him on—the spare room's just the place!" and into the spare room, across the hall, slantingwise, they went.

That was empty, too, but a rocking-chair stood beside an old-fashioned hooded cradle, with some white sewing lying across its seat.

Elton Slade had not been into the spare room for a long while—not since he helped Waitstill put down the carpet after spring house-cleaning. It was a strange, unfamiliar place to him. His eye lighted on the cradle.

"Sho! that's where she put it, is it?" Don't it look nice in here! And Waitstill's got in all shined up. It's just where this little young one belongs—in with you!"

The baby snuggled into the little nest with grave approval, and Elton left it there and went back to put up his horse.

"I'll tell her at supper time," he said to himself.

At supper time Waitstill came in breezily and hurried the things onto the table. She had been over to Aunt Drusilla Rudd's on an errand.

"Well, Elton, what did you get to Bill—Bill Jim's is it?—auction?" she said, cheerfully. "I looked in the wagon to see as I came along, but I couldn't see anything but two rake heads."

"I got those," Elton said, promptly; "there's enough teeth in 'em to make one—I only paid a cent apiece."

He was playing uneasily with his knife and fork, listening all the time for a baby's sharp wail. But it did not come.

"I'll tell her at milking time," he thought.

On his way out of the kitchen, he bethought him to look in on the little young one and see if it was all right. He went round to the front door and stole in through the hall in his stocking feet. The baby was asleep. His tiny, wizened face made a faint pink spot on the pillow, and one little round arm

was thrown across the gay quilt. The little rosy palm was uppermost.

"Sho! sho!" muttered Elton Slade, a little huskily. The forefinger that had been in prison tingled inexplicably.

He crept across to the cradle and bent over it. The small palm quivered at the touch of his bearded lips, but the baby slept on.

"Sho! sho! sho!"

After the supper dishes were washed and set away, Waitstill went back into the spare room for her work. A little cry greeted her on the threshold. In utter astonishment, she followed it to the pink spot on the little cradle pillow. In the room's dim light it seemed to her that the "making believe" had suddenly embodied itself by some amazing miracle. Yes, oh, yes! A baby lay in the cradle, wriggling feebly under the little gay patchwork quilt! A baby—flesh and blood, with moist, warm little fists and an imperative little cry!

Waitstill sank down beside it and drew it into her arms. Then through one of her swift intuitions she knew that it was Jim Bill's little baby—she knew it!

She knew Elton had brought it home to her.

"This is what he got at the auction!" she cried.

If Elton could have seen her then, in the dark room with the light all in her face!

If Jim Bill—poor Jim Bill—could only have seen her.

At milking time, when Elton Slade went back to the house for the milk-pails—and to tell Waitstill, a strange picture met him.

Waitstill sat in front of the stove in a low rocking-chair, giving the baby a bath. A basin of water and a soft towel were near.

The baby long-clothes lay in a heap on the floor and the tiny, pink, unshrouded form lay in Waitstill's lap. She touched it with light motherly fingers.

"Sho! sho!" She was crooning a little low song without any words. Elton stood in the doorway and listened. How fast her hands