

years had been devoted to that purpose, and went into the cool sitting-room to rest in her favorite chintz-covered rocker.

Miss Reliance Roxbury had been for twenty years with the exception of a gardener and housemaid, the sole occupant of this ancient stone dwelling, that had stood for more than a century beneath its elms and maples, the pride of the village of Lynford. She was a stern woman, who liked but few people, and had a horror of children, dogs and sentiment. The village boys, with a keen perception of her unsympathetic nature, called her "Old Ironsides."

She was proud of her birth and of the substantial property that had fallen to her at the death of her father, old Judge Roxbury. She was a member of the Presbyterian Church, and paid a high rental for the Roxbury pew, but with that considered that her pecuniary obligations to the cause were at an end. As a general thing, she had not allowed convictions on the subject of giving to trouble her, but somehow, ever since Sunday, when the pastor stated the work of the fresh air fund and made a fervent appeal for these "little ones that suffer," she had been subjected to numerous vague but uncomfortable sensations.

She rocked back and forth in the spacious sitting-room that no fly dared to invade, and noted the perfect order of the apartment. From the China shepherdess on the mantel, to the braided rugs at the doors, everything occupied the same position as in the days of Miss Roxbury's girlhood. There was torture in the thought of having the table cover pulled awry, of seeing the shells and prim old daguerreotypes disarranged on the what-not, of having sand tracked in by small feet over the faded Brussels carpet, and her pet verbena bed invaded by eager young fingers.

Surely, religion and humanity could not demand such sacrifices of her.

"Please, ma'am, the currants is ready to put over," said Hannah at the door.

Miss Roxbury rose at once, glad of another channel for her thoughts, but, amid her weighing and measuring of pints and pounds, the strange impression did not leave her mind.

After the rich crimson syrup had been poured into the row of shining tumblers on the table, she returned to her chintz-covered rocker, and took up the Bible to read her daily chapter. Opening it at random, her eyes fell upon these words:

"Then shall He answer them, saying: 'Inasmuch as ye did it not unto one of the least of these—'

Miss Roxbury read no further on that page, but hurriedly turned back to Chronicles, which she felt was perfectly safe ground. But, mingled with the long genealogical tables, she saw other words between the lines, so that the Israelitish record read thus:—

"The son of Elkanah, the son of Joel, the son of Azariah. ('Ye did it not.')

"The son of Tahath, the son of Assir, the son of Ebiasaph, the son of Korah. ('Ye did it not.')

Finally, the whole page seemed to resolve itself into these four monosyllables.

She closed the Bible and put it in its accustomed place on the table, bounded on the north by the lamp, on the south by the match box, on the east by Bunyan's "Pilgrim's Progress" and on the west by a bunch of worsted roses under a glass case. She was restless, miserable, tormented. She endeavored to read the "Life of Napoleon Bonaparte," but even the thrilling story of the Russian campaign was lacking in interest, compared with her own inward conflict between duty and the cold selfishness of a lifetime.

She did not enjoy the dinner, although the butterbeans were from her garden, and the black raspberries were the first of the season.

She could not take her accustomed afternoon nap, and for the first time in years the daily paper was unopened. She even put it out of sight in the china closet. A wonderful new design in patch-work, known as the Rocky Mountain pattern, could not fasten her attention.

She ordered the horse and rockaway and drove four miles after wild cherry bark, for which she had no need, as her garret was already a great herbarium.

At last the dreary day came to its close, but was succeeded by an equally uncomfortable night. Amid frequent tossing and waking, Miss Roxbury dreamed of thin little hands stretched out to her in piteous appeal, and of a sad, wonderful voice that said with infinite reproach,—

"Ye did it not."

Rev. Joseph Alder was surprised soon after breakfast the next morning by the appearance of Miss Reliance Roxbury in the parsonage porch. She brought a basket of black raspberries, and said,—

"I won't come in this time, thank you. I just wanted to say that I'll take one—one of those children."

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"Mamma, is it morning?" and the child turned restlessly on the straw pallet in a corner of the small, hot room.

"No, Dot, go to sleep."

It was after midnight and in summer, but there was a fire in the stove, for the woman at the pine table was ironing by the light of a glimmering tallow candle. There was no breeze, but in at the one window came stifling, poisonous odors.

Pale and faint, the mother bent over her work, and smoothed the dark calico dress as carefully as if it were the finest muslin and lace. She had worked from early dawn until dark at her daily task, button holes at