

"I better not say much about that time. 'Twas a bad spell. My heart, that had got kind o' soft an' warm with somethin' to love an' take care on, got hard an' frozen agin, an' oh, the hard thoughts I had o' God for takin' my last comfort away, an' lettin' both my little Jacobs go away to lay for ever 'n' ever in the dark an' cold! The spring-time came, an' I hated it; an' oh, I dreaded the time when the fire-weed would come out all pink an' bright, with him not there no more to eat it, nor my curly-headed boy to pick it! One summer day—I sha'n't never forget it's long 's I live—I was standin' by Jacob's little grave (I'd always kep' his box in my room jest 's it was), when I see the dirt had got shook off the top, an' the poor little body, all dried up an' brown now, was kinder uncovered. I was jest a-goin' to cover it up agin softly, when I seen a little crack come on it, an'—oh, I can't tell it all out in this slow, quiet way! I wish 't could come on yo' as it did on me that blessed day—Jacob was comin' to life agin! he was—he was! I watched him, never touchin' or speakin' to him—though I jest ached to help—till the end come, an' he was big an' beautiful, brown an' buff an' pink, an' with wings! Oh, Mis' Burton, I can't put it inter words how I felt when I see Jacob come out o' his very grave an' spread his wings an' fly round my room, nor how I cried right out loud as I see it: 'Why not my boy too? O Lord, you can do that jest 's easy 's this!'"

I left Franconia at the end of summer, and during the winter months heard nothing from the little snow-bound village. But when June came again I sought, as for twenty years I have sought, the grand old mountains—old but ever new. One of my earliest visits was to the little white house of Aunt Randy. I spied my old friend in the garden, and felt sure she was having a friendly gossip with some winged friends. I passed through the gate to join her, and as I did so saw a man sitting on the door-steps. He was unmistakably of the genus tramp, had a mean, sly face, with light shifting eyes, and looked a thorough vagabond. I wondered at his presence there, but forgot it instantly in the pleasure of meeting again my old comrade. She knew me at once, and her rugged face was thinner and more worn than when I last saw her, brightened as she met me. After a few words of greeting, she asked me to come into the house, and we were soon seated in the familiar room, the scene of Jacob's death and apotheosis.

"Did you see him?" she suddenly asked, with a jerk of her head towards the front door.

"I saw a man outside," I replied.

"It's him," she went on, quietly—"my husband, ye know—Mr. Gates. He wa'n't dead; 'twas a mistake, somehow; an' he come home las' winter!"

For a minute I was speechless, and before I could decide what to say, whether to congratulate or condole with my friend, she spoke again:

"I can speak plain to you, for I got to feel so to home with you