

The Home Mission Journal.

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Rosecroft.

CHAPTER XI.

"I am glad you like our home," said Miss Hathaway, pleased with the girl's delight. "And here comes my good Rosie to give us a welcome," she added as the faithful domestic, her face beaming with joy, came running from the kitchen-garden down a side-path to the front gate.

Elsie, who had had her secret fears of Rosie, felt relieved as she saw this plump, good-natured-looking woman. She was very trim, to be sure, in her neat, dark-blue calico, snow-white apron and cap, but she did not look at all stiff or severe. Her blue-gray eyes were full of sunshine and good humor. Rosie was Scotch-Irish, and a Protestant, a good Christian woman, who, during the eighteen years she had served Miss Hathaway, had become thoroughly imbued with the atmosphere of love and sunshine that surrounded her.

"Well, well, Miss Hathaway," she said, as she shook her mistress' outstretched hand, "It's glad I am to see you back, for I've missed you dreadfully!"

"And I'm so happy to be back, Rosie, and to see your bright face again. And this is my niece, Miss Elsie Hardy, whom I wrote to you about, and who has come to make her home with us."

"And it's right glad I am to see you, Miss Elsie," cried Rosie, shaking the hand the girl held out in her turn, "and a pleasant thing it will be for us to have a young girl in the house to make things lively. And the little doggie, too; my! but he's in spirits!" for Rags, who, evidently approved of Rosie, was frantically barking and wagging his tail.

"But let me help you out, Miss Hathaway," she continued. "It's tired you must all be after your long journey, and hung y, too."

She assisted her mistress to alight, and took out the hand luggage, while the hackman attended to the trunks, and Rags barked afresh at sight of a big Maltese cat which had started to come down the walk, but paused and arched his back at sight of the dog.

"Why, there's old Rollo!" exclaimed Miss Diantha. "Pussy, Pussy, come to your mistress," she called, as they entered the garden gate.

Pussy, thus adjured, came trotting down the walk with one eye on Rags. Miss Diantha took up her pet, who nestled against her cheek, purring loudly.

"Poor Rollo! dear old Rollo!" Miss Hathaway went on, stroking the cat, "Rosie will you show the hackman where to put our trunks?"

"You must be friends with little Rags, Rollo!" she went on to her pet, as Rosie, bearing the hand luggage, led the way for the hackman. "You are to live together, you know. Please hold Rags nearer to me, Elsie."

Elsie did as she was asked, but Rollo at once stopped purring, and eyed Rags with suspicious, sullen disapproval.

"Good Rollo! Poor, nice little Rags!" said Miss Diantha, stroking them each alternately. "Now kiss and be friends!"

Rags thrust out his shaggy little head in an inquisitive though friendly fashion. But Pussy's only response was an angry snarl.

"Naughty Rollo!" said Miss Hathaway, giving him an admonitory pat; "to treat poor little Rags that way! 'Well, they might get used to each other and become friends in time. Don't you want to put Rags down now, Elsie? I'm going to carry Rollo into the house."

Elsie released Rags, who quickly vanished to make the exploration of the grounds.

"This trellised walk is like an arbor," said Elsie, looking up at the rose-canopied latticed roof overhead.

"Yes, it's a pretty approach to the house, and, as you see, our little porch is embellished with climbing roses too. But come in now and welcome to your new home. May we all be very happy together!"

She kissed Elsie as they entered the door, and the young girl returned the caress warmly.

"Dearest aunty," she said, "I can't tell you what this home is to me! May I be nothing but a comfort to you always!"

"I'm sure you'll be a great comfort and blessing to me, Elsie. Why, what is this?" she exclaimed suddenly as her eye fell upon a graceful archway of foliage and flowers above her parlor door, in which letters forming the word "Welcome" in white and crimson immortelles were skillfully interwoven upon a background of green.

"How lovely!" exclaimed Miss Hathaway, "an ornament to the drawing-room door too!"

At this moment the hackman came down the stairs, followed by Rosie. Miss Hathaway paid the man, and after he had gone she turned to the maid with the words:

"Rosie, is it you who have been decorating so prettily here?"

"No, no," laughed Rosie; "it's your young lassies from the Sunday school were here this morning, axing could they put these decorations up in honor of your coming home."

"The dear girls!" exclaimed Miss Diantha, a gentle moisture in her eyes, "How I long to see them! Well, Elsie, shall we go up stairs?"

Rosie followed them, a merry, expectant twinkle in her eyes.

"Why those dear, naughty girls have been decorating here too! Dear little souls, how they must have worked; robbing their gardens, I'm afraid, as well as the woods and meadows!"

"Well, it's only fitting they should give you pleasure, Miss Hathaway, for you're always doing something kind for them. I was only afraid they'd make a fearful mess but they swept and brushed up everything after they got through," explained Rosie.

"Everything just shines, Rosie; you have kept the house in the most beautiful order, but you ought to have had some help."

"Sure, it would only have made me extra work and worry. And now I'll go down, for I'm sure you'll be hungry after your long journey and want your tea early."

"Yes, we shall be quite ready for it, Rosie."

The girl hurried down sure that the travelers would appreciate the supper she was preparing for them.

"See, Elsie," said Miss Hathaway, "what a lovely arch of white roses with their foliage those dear girls have placed above the door of my Aunt Grace's room. That touches me so much, for though she passed away before any of them were born, they know how lovely a woman she was, and that roses were her favorite flowers. I will show you the room later. I often sit there with my books or sewing, for it's the favorite

chamber in the house to me. This room adjoining is yours, opposite mine, across the hall. Ah!" her face beaming, "the girls have decorated your door as well as mine. They must have heard from Rosie that you were coming and wished to give you a friendly welcome."

"It was very kind of them to think of me," said Elsie, glancing up at the pretty archway with its word of "welcome."

"I must make you acquainted with them Sunday and will have them here to tea soon. But come, let me introduce you to your own little nest."

"Oh!" exclaimed Elsie, as they entered the room. Then she stood speechless a moment gazing about her. Could it be possible that this was for her, the despised Eliza, to whom had been assigned a little rear chamber in the fourth story of her stepfather's house? Anything was considered good enough for Eliza, and she never forgot a remark she overheard her mother make to Miss Trump, when the child was about ten years old: "Oh, Eliza has no more love for the beautiful than a cat! She doesn't know whether a thing is pretty or ugly, and is so destructive. Besid's it is much better to give her ugly things to ruin!"

The sneer rankled in Eliza's heart, for, though her ruling passion was for books, and she spent most of her pocket money for them, as she grew older she really did like pretty things, and only needed to have the taste cultivated and developed.

And now this chamber was given her, such a contrast to the one she had left, and though not very large, nearly twice the size of that cheerless little room. The walls were of a pale cream tint, with a cornice and dado of blue and pink morning glories, exquisitely painted, and entwining gracefully amid their foliage of tender green. The pretty toilet-set and most of the furniture were cream-tinted too, and ornamented with the same pattern of flowers. Beautiful engravings and some charming paintings hung upon the walls. There were hanging bamboo shelves full of interesting-looking volumes, a little rosewood writing desk and a pretty sewing table.

Elsie turned suddenly and hid her face upon Miss Hathaway's shoulder.

"My head just swims with it all!" she exclaimed, choking back a sob. "How can you trust this beautiful room to a girl like me! Why it's like fairyland!"

Miss Hathaway had tears in her eyes as she replied, softly stroking the girl's hair: "I shall love to think of your enjoying this little room, Elsie; my aunt gave it to me when I was ten years old, thinking it was time that I had a chamber of my own. When I was twenty she gave me the 'violet room' across the hall, because I was so fond of violets; she painted this and the other three bedrooms on this floor with her own dear hands."

"How talented she must have been!" exclaimed Elsie.

"Yes, she had an exquisite gift for painting flowers," responded Miss Hathaway.

"Oh, aunty, I don't know how to thank you for this lovely room, and I will try to keep it in the best of order," continued Elsie.

"I'm sure you'll keep it nicely," answered her aunt. "There is a closet where you can hang dresses and so forth. And now we must get ready for tea."

Left alone, Elsie stood a moment, gazing about her with moistening eyes.

"It seems as if life had begun for me again all new and fresh and beautiful! What has made the difference? Dear Aunt Diantha, she has come into my life and changed it already. Oh, is there a love greater, sweeter even than hers, a love that has brought me here, and that will help me to grow into a woman like her? It is the love of God!"

(To be Continued.)