

worked or not, and be sure and keep the front door bolted, and put that last brood of chickens in the other coop, and keep a newspaper over the geranium slips in the afternoon."

"Yes, ma'am."

"And Hannah, be very careful to keep out the flies, and tell Hiram to fix the well curb. He is so apt to forget things."

Dot was bathed in tears as she mounted to her place in the rockaway.

"Isn't I coming back?" she said.

"I hope so, dear," replied Miss Roxbury, who appeared preoccupied and anxious and scarcely heard Dot's chatter on the way to the station.

"Why, Miss Roxbury," said Mr. Alder as he assisted her to the platform, "you are a veritable fairy godmother. This rosy, dainty maiden cannot be the same bit of humanity that I held in my arm a fortnight ago. You will miss her, will you not?"

"I shall go with her to New York, any way," said Miss Roxbury, "and I don't mean to come back alone, either. Mr. Alder, I hope God will forgive me for the empty house I have had all these long years."

"An empty house means a lonely heart," he replied. "I'm glad you're going with the child."

That afternoon Miss Roxbury and Dot, attended by Mr. Knox, wended their way through a dark alley in one of the most squalid districts of New York City, and climbed flight after flight of rickety stairs in a rear tenement. The heat, the filth, the scenes of misery were indescribable. Miss Roxbury felt as if she were in the confines of the bottomless pit.

Dot darted down a long passage and disappeared in a room beyond. The friends followed and beheld her clasped tightly in the arms of a wan figure that lay on the couch. The woman had fainted.

"Mamma, mamma, look at me!" pleaded Dot, beginning to cry.

There was no water in the room, and Mr. Knox took a cracked pitcher from the shelf and went with Dot in search of some. Miss Roxbury knelt beside the woman, who was only about thirty years of age and had been very attractive as a young girl. There was a gleam of gold on her left hand. Her hair was sunny like Dot's and her features delicately shaped. The letter that Miss Roxbury had written lay crumpled and tear-stained on the pillow.

While Miss Roxbury gazed the woman opened her eyes. They were beautiful eyes, but sad with want and a struggle against despair. She tried to sit up and moaned,—

"My baby—please give me my baby."

Just then Dot returned and carried the pitcher of water to her mother, who drank long and eagerly; then holding out her arms to Dot, said feebly to Miss Roxbury,—

"Oh, madam, will you take care of my little girl? I think I'm going to die."

"You're not going to die—not a bit of it," said Miss Roxbury, pouring out some wine into a teacup, "but I'll take care of you both. There, drink this, and you'll feel better right away. How long since you've had anything to eat?"

"Day before yesterday," was the faint reply. "I had to stop work four days ago."

"Now, Mr. Knox," said Miss Roxbury, slipping her purse into his hand, "just step out to the nearest grocery and order some kindling wood and tea and sugar. I'll poach a nice, fresh egg for this poor soul, and then we'll see about getting her out of this place."

The woman's face brightened, but she said,—

"I'm giving you much trouble."

"Trouble!" said Miss Roxbury. "I'm all alone in the world, and I've a house with twenty-four rooms in it, and plenty to do with, and what I've been thinking of all these years I can't say. I've been a crusty, cold, disagreeable old fossil, Mrs. Winthrop, and when I come down here and find folks starving to death and crowded like cattle, I wonder the good Lord's had any mercy on me. Don't you worry another mite. Here's the fire stuff already."

Miss Roxbury rolled up her sleeves, put an apron over her silk skirt, and while Mr. Knox built a fire and brought water to heat, she bathed Mrs. Winthrop's face and hands, and brushed out her lovely hair.

"Thank God! why, I'm better already," said Mrs. Winthrop, with a rare smile.

"Of course you are, child," said Miss Roxbury. "We'll see what good food and mountain air will do for you."

A few days later found an occupant in the great east chamber of the Roxbury house.

Mrs. Winthrop sat in an easy chair before the open window inhaling the fragrance of the blossoming honeysuckle that nodded to her through the casement. The morning sunlight fell across her bright hair and peaceful face. Dot hung over her shoulder and threw daisies in her lap.

Down by the garden fence stood Miss Roxbury, talking with her neighbor, Mrs. Lane. Mrs. Winthrop smiled from her window, and there came an answering smile from the depths of the purple calico sun-bonnet.

"So you're really going to keep them?" said Mrs. Lane.

"Yes, I've adopted them both," replied Miss Roxbury, with a Te Deum in her voice, "and I've sent for half a dozen little girls to stay until cold weather comes."

"Well, it does beat all," said Mrs. Lane, wiping her eyes on the corner of her checked gingham apron. "I s'pose I needn't ask you now, Reliance, what you think of the Fresh-Air Fund?"