

six years, as frail as a snowdrop, whose coarse attire could not mar the loveliness of her dark violet eyes and hair of tangled sunbeams. The little creature stretched out her arms to Miss Roxbury, who reached forward and took her into the rockaway, the ancient springs of which creaked with astonishment.

"What is your name?" said Miss Roxbury, feeling strangely awkward as they drove along.

"Dot," said the child. "You hasn't kissed me yet, has you?"

Miss Roxbury bent and kissed the child. The rockaway creaked louder than before. The touch of the child's mouth thrilled the iron nerves of the woman with a sensation inexpressibly delightful.

Miss Roxbury had imagined her life to be a happy one. She now discovered that she had mistaken selfish isolation for happiness. She was beginning to be happy the first time in fifty years. Dot was too tired to be very talkative, but she leaned against Miss Roxbury with a look of quiet wonder and content in her eyes.

"Is I goin' to stay here?" she asked, as the rockaway stopped at the Roxbury gate and she surveyed the old stone house with woodbine clamouring over its grey walls.

"Yes, child."

Dot's face grew luminous. A bath, a bountiful supply of bread and milk and a walk in the garden kept her joyful till twilight, but with bedtime came the longing for the mother.

"I want my mamma—my own mamma," she said.

Then Miss Roxbury gave full vent to the instinct that can never be utterly destroyed in a woman.

Taking the child on her lap she caressed the white face and sunny curls in a restful, soothing way, and talked so cheerfully that the shadows fell from the violet eyes, and Dot, nestling close, said, "I love you."

Miss Roxbury not only begun to be happy; she had begun to live. With the coming of this sweet child heaven was changing the dull prose of her existence into celestial rhythm. Her cold, loveless nature in the presence of this tiny girl was already becoming Christ-like in its tender mercy.

Dot offered her evening prayer and was put in Miss Roxbury's own stately bed.

"Good night, dear," said Miss Roxbury with a kiss.

"Good night," said Dot, burying her face in the great bunch of white roses she had brought to bed with her. "I feel zif I'd died an' gone to heaven."

Miss Roxbury passed a wakeful night, but not a restless one. Her mind was filled with plans, and then it was such a pleasure to lie and listen to the soft breathing at her side, and occasionally to touch her little hand on the counterpane, still holding the treasured roses.

The next day Dot ran nearly wild with delight. She revelled among the daisies in the deep soft grass, and it was pitiful to see how small an object could charm her hungry mind. God's commonest gifts were unknown to her in bounty and purity. Sunshine, sweet air, flowers and bird songs were enough to make her happy, and when she found the brook that danced across the meadow her delight was unbounded. After a day or two Miss Roxbury took the morning train down to Bradleyville to do some shopping. She was gone until night, and all the way home she thought of the glad voice that would welcome her, and her face grew so radiant with the new joy in her soul that when she alighted at Lynford station, old Deacon Bennett failed to recognize her until she had passed him.

"Wall, I declare," he said, "Reliance looks as if she had disikivered a gold mine."

Miss Roxbury reached home and soon had the "gold mine" in her arms.

After tea the parcels had to be opened. There was paper patterns, rolls of muslin, embroidery and blue flannel, a pair of child's slippers, dainty hose, bright ribbons and a large doll.

"Oh, oh, oh!" was all that Dot could say, but her tone expressed more than the most extensive volume of philanthropy that was ever written. The village dressmaker was installed in the house for a week. The Rocky Mountain patchwork was consigned to the seclusion of the spare room closet, and Miss Roxbury developed a taste in Mother Hubbard's dresses and ruffled aprons that was truly marvellous.

In the meantime she wrote a letter to Dot's mother, in which Dot added the picture of the cat, which, although not absolutely true to nature, resembling in

fact the plan for a house, was a great satisfaction to the young artist. There came no reply to this letter.

Dot's cheeks were getting rosy and her step buoyant. "If it wasn't for mamma," she said, "I wouldn't want to go back forever'n ever."

When Mr. Knox, the gentleman in charge of the party, called to see that Dot would be ready to return at the appointed time, Miss Roxbury exclaimed almost fiercely:

"I can't let her go. I need her. Why may I not keep her?"

"I do not believe her mother would part with her," said Mr. Knox.

Miss Roxbury was silent for a few moments, but looked out on the lawn where Dot was swinging in a hammock with the doll and cat.

"It will be a dull house without the child," she said; "but I will bring her to the station."

#### IV.

When the morning of Dot's departure came, Miss Roxbury arrayed herself in her second-best black silk, put a few articles in a satchel, filled a small basket with fresh eggs, new biscuit, a pot of butter and a bottle of currant wine, and said to Hannah:—

"I may be gone two or three days. Have the east chamber thoroughly well aired and dusted before I get back, tell Hiram to take a peck of peas down to Mrs. Alder, don't forget to see if those canned strawberries have worked or not, and be sure the front door is kept bolted, and put the last brood of chickens in the other cop, and keep a newspaper over the geranium slips in the afternoon."

"Yes, ma'm."

"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 comin' 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 god mother. This rosy, dainty maiden cannot be the same bit of humanity that I held in my arms a fortnight ago. You will miss her, will you not?"

"I shall go with her to New York anyway," 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've had all these years."

"An empty house means a lonely heart," he replied. "And I am glad you are 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 was on 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 a pallet. The woman had fainted.

"Mamma, mamma, look at me!" pleaded Dot, and began 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 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. This 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:

"O madam, will you take care of my little girl? I think I am going to die."

"You are not going to die—not a bit of it," said Miss Roxbury, pouring 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 stop out to the nearest grocery and order some kindling wood, tea and sugar. I'll poach a nice fresh egg for this poor soul, and 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 first 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, bathed Mrs. Winthrop's face and hands and brushed out her 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 yet."

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 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 neighbour, 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 goin' to keep 'em," said Miss Lane.

"Yes, I've adopted both of 'em," 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."

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

"What do I think of it?" said Miss Roxbury gravely. "I believe it's been the means of saving my soul. I should have gone into the next world holding my head pretty high, and considering myself better than most folk, and the Judge would have said, 'Reliance Roxbury, I gave you a large house and a long bank account. What have you done with them?' Then how my empty rooms and Grandfather Roxbury's gold pieces would have stood up against me! And he would have said, 'Ye did it not unto me. Depart from me,' and what answer could I have made him? It is very true," she continued, as Dot came flitting down the pathway like a fairy, "'of such is the Kingdom of Heaven.'"

#### A CALM MAN'S EXPERIENCE IN HIS COFFIN.

BY HERBERT NEWBURY, IN THE BOSTON CONGREGATIONALIST.

The trains collided. I am a calm man. I confess I was startled; but resigned myself manfully, and was calm. I got a thump on my spine and the back of my head. I lay beside the railroad track amid the dying and the dead. I felt pretty well, quite sensible and rational, was not in pain, but I could not move. Even my tongue refused to stir. My body seemed dead, my mind and spirit were in full life. "Remarkable state," calmly reflected I, "wonder what will come of it!"

What came? A doctor came. He chucked me under the chin, turned me the other side up and back again, put his ear to my chest, got no response, muttered, "Dead! Fatal blow on the head and spine," and considerably gave his best attention to the living. I am not only a calm man, but a just. I did not blame him, but inwardly remarked, "My situation is disagreeable—very."

I lay with the unclaimed dead a long while; yet not