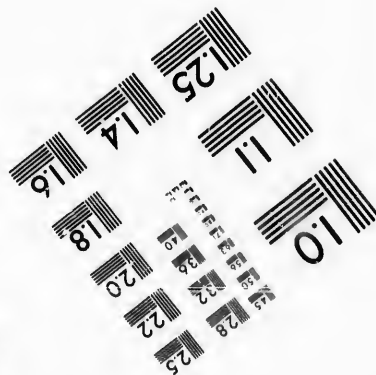
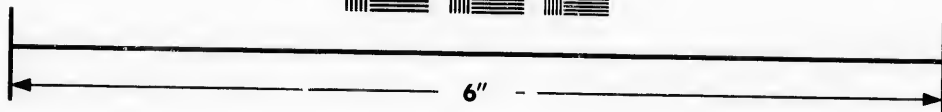
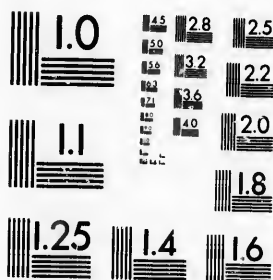


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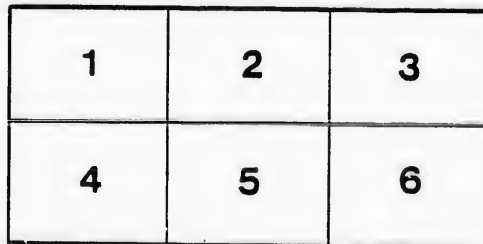
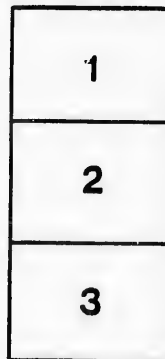
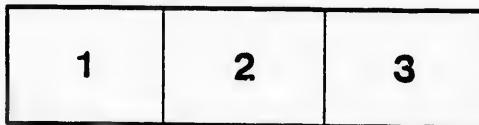
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Toronto

DOZ.

A STORY OF THE FRESH AIR FUND.

With note of commendation by
S. H. BLAKE, Q.C.

S. R. BRIGGS,
Toronto Willard Tract Depository,
TORONTO, CANADA.

3c. each; 25c. per doz.; \$1.50 per 100.

MY DEAR MR. BRIGGS :

The reading of the enclosed has charmed me much. Read it. Is it not good? Would it not be well to publish it? It must strike a responsive chord in many hearts. How calmly and with refined selfishness we pass by on the other side in place of grasping the offered opportunities of benevolence and charity. I believe in the last day there will be no more wonderful revelation than the immense number of instances in which "ye did it not" might, by us, have been changed into the benediction "ye did it." May God bless the touching circumstances here related to the hearts of all readers as He did to the once steeled heart of Miss Reliance Roxbury. If you publish it I will take 1,000 copies for distribution.

Faithfully yours,
S. H. BLAKE.

January 11, 1883.

DOT.

A STORY OF THE FRESH AIR FUND.

"It's a harum-scarum idea!" said Miss Reliance Roxbury, as she stood among the currant bushes at the garden fence. "A most ridiculous idea! I wonder what this gushing American people will do next?" And she gave an emphatic twitch to her purple calico sun-bonnet.

There was a faint murmur of dissent from a little woman on the other side of the moss grown fence.

"No—of course you can't agree with me," continued Miss Reliance, as the clusters of ruby and pearl flew into the six quart pail at her feet. "You're so soft-hearted that your feelings are forever running off with your common sense. You never say a word about the national debt, or the condition of our navy, but let anybody start a subscription for send-

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ing blanket shawls to Brazil or putting up a monument to Methusalah on the meeting house green, you'll give your last quarter. And now, your'e going to open your house to a lot of little ragamuffins from New York?"

The motherly brown eyes on the other side of the fence were full of tears, and a pleasant voice replied:

"It makes my heart ache to think how the poor things suffer crowded together in dirty streets, with never a breath of clover field or a glass of milk. If you'd just read about it, Reliance, you'd count it a blessed privilege to give them a bit of our sunshine."

"I'd as soon have a tribe of Zulus on the place," said Miss Reliance, "and if you'll take my advice you'll save yourself lots of trouble."

Mrs. Lane stopped her work for a moment and said:

"Liakim and me are all alone now, Reliance. One by one we've laid

Kate and Sarah and baby Lizzie over there in the old burying ground ; and Jack is in Colorado, and Richard in Boston, and we get hungry sometimes for the sound of little feet. When I began to read about the Fresh Air Fund it kind of sent a thrill all over me, and 'Liakim he reads about it every day, before he ever looks at the Egyptian war, and he wipes his glasses pretty often too. Then when we heard the parson say that a party would come here if places could be found for 'em, Liakim spoke right off for four, and they'll be here next Tuesday, and I'm going to make it just as much like heaven as I can."

" You'll make yourself sick, that's what you'll do, Amanda Lane," replied Miss Reliance, " but if you want your garden overrun and your silver spoons stolen, and your house full of flies, and your nerves prostrated, why it's your own fault. I must go in and get my jelly started."

Miss Roxbury went up the path between the sun-flowers and hollyhocks, entered the large sunny, airy kitchen and set down the currants for Hannah, the house maid, to pick over. Then she hung the purple calico sun-bonnet on the nail that for forty years had been dedicated 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 house maid, the sole occupant of this 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 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 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 away, of seeing the shells and

prim old daguerreotypes disarranged on the whatnot, 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 to be 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, and her careful calculations 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 ye did it not unto Me.' ”

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 records read thus :

“ The son of Elkanah, the son of Joel, the son of Azariah. (‘ Ye did it not.’)”

“ The son of Tanath, 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 a lamp, on the south by the match-box, on the east by Bunyan's I'ilgrim's Progress, and on the west by a bunch of worsted roses under a glass case. She was

restless, miserable, tormented. She endeavoured 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 her dinner, although the butter-beans 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 Tribune* lay unopened. She even put it out of the way in the china closet. A wonderful new design in patchwork 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 a sad wonderful voice that said with infinite reproach :

“Ye did not.”

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

“I won't come in this time, thank you. I just want to say I'll take one—one of those children.”

II.

“Mamma, is it mornin'?”

“No, Dot; go to sleep.”

The child turned restlessly on the miserable straw pallet in the corner of the small, hot room. 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 open window came stifling, poisonous odours.

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 four cents a dozen. A cup of tea and crust of bread had been her sustenance. For Dot there was a bun and an orange.

The dress was finished and hung on the only chair in the room, with several other small articles. A hat of coarse white straw, with a blue ribbon twisted around it, a pair of bright stockings, a tiny handkerchief with a bit of colour in the border. All were pitifully cheap in texture, but dear in patient toil and loving sacrifice. Dot was going to the

country for two long, blissful weeks, and the mother could cover the expense of the meagre outfit by some extra deprivation during the child's absence. She turned toward the pallet. Dot's violet eyes had opened. Her golden curls were tangled by the tossing of the little head on the pillow. Her thin, pinched features were flushed with feverish excitement.

"Mamma, is it mornin'?"

"No, darling."

The woman blew out the light and threw herself on the pallet. Tiny fingers crept eagerly into her palm.

"Mamma; tell me more about it," pleaded Dot.

"Darling, it is years and years since mamma saw the country, but it was just as I've told you. Wide, clean streets, with big trees and blue sky and flowers."

"Oh, oh!" murmured Dot, "Does you 'spose they'll give me one f'ower,

mamma? I found on the street once—a 'ittle w'ite f'ower. A lady dropped it."

"Yes, dear, you'll have all the flowers you'll want, don't talk any more to-night."

The sky was already white with the dawn. The mother did not sleep. As the light of another day of misery crept into the room, she raised herself on one elbow and looked long at her child, resisting an impulse to snatch it to her heart, then softly rose, and after bathing her face and hands and kneeling in prayer for endurance, took her work and sat down by the narrow window. A few hours later she stood amid the bustle of the Grand Central depot with Dot clinging to her dress. A crowd of wandering, expectant children were being marshalled into line to take their places on the eastward-bound train.

"Come," said the kind gentleman in charge, to Dot,

Dot kissed her mother "good-bye," and laughed even while the tears ran down her face, as she entered the ranks of the odd procession.

"Oh, sir!" said the mother, as she turned away, "take good care of my baby. I've nothing else in the world."

III.

There was an unusual stir in the village of Lynford. The railway station was thronged with people, and surrounded with vehicles awaiting the afternoon train.

The Rev. Joseph Alder and the ministers of sister churches conversed together on the platform.

"A glorious charity!" said the Baptist minister, raising his hat to wipe the perspiration from his brow.

"I expect that these poor children will be a great blessing to our people," said the Methodist minister, "in broadening the sympathies and warming the hearts of some who

have been oblivious to all interests save their own."

"Yes," replied the Rev. Mr. Alder, "I have a practical illustration of that, not a stone's throw from where we are standing."

The "practical illustration" consisted of the Rockbury rockaway drawn up amid the other conveyances, with Miss Reliance on the back seat, in a state of mind in which newly-fledged philanthropy struggled with a terror of ragamuffins. She had come to the conclusion that her visit to the parsonage had been made during an attack of mental aberration; but the word of a Roxbury was as immovable as the historic granite on which Zephaniah Roxbury stepped from the *Mayflower* in 1620, and the last representative of the race would not falter now, although seized with dire apprehension whenever her eyes rested on the verbena bed.

It was with a grim determination

to brave the worst, that she awaited the train that afternoon, but when the locomotive appeared on the bridge below the village, the thought of the dreadful boy who was coming to invade her peaceful domain nearly overcame her, and her impulse was to order the hired man to drive home as quickly as possible. She could appreciate the emotions of a Roman dame at the approach of the Vandal.

As the train stopped at the station the people crowded forward to welcome their guests. Miss Roxbury peered anxiously from the rockaway. It was not a very appalling sight. A group of pale little children, tired, dusty and bewildered. Many eyes overflowed as the train moved on, and left these wistful faces, pinched by want and misfortune, in the midst of the kindly villagers.

"Here, Miss Roxbury, here is a wee lamb for you," said Mr. Alder.

Miss Roxbury had not observed his approach in the crowd, and gave a start of surprise as he stood before her. As she looked there was a curious sensation under the left side of her crape shawl, and her cold grey eyes grew misty.

The "dreadful boy" had changed into a tiny girl of 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 clamoring 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 misery.

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 with parcels 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 diskivered 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 exten-

sive 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 'he east chamber thor-

oroughly 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 coop, 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 rock-away.

"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 plat-

form, "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. Aider, 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 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. 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’m going to die.”

“ You are not going to die—not a bit of it,” said Miss Roxbury, pouring out some wine into a tea-cup, “ 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 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 folk 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, she

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 answer-

ing 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 o' 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."

THE END.



