

A Child's Viewpoint

Alice Monds

She beckoned to me, and with much apprehension I entered the door of the shabby unpainted house. Inside, the room was small and dark and almost the entire space was taken up by a big metal-framed bed which stuck out into the middle of the room. A ragged upholstered chair in one corner and a small pot-bellied stove in the other completed the furnishings. The windows, uncurtained, were filthy and one was covered with pieces of a cardboard box where the pane had been broken out.

The disheveled woman who asked me to come in was telling me to get my grandmother and have her call the doctor. I looked at the bed. There, amid the torn and dirty quilts, lay a grizzled old woman. Her gray hair, streaked with yellow, stuck out all around her head and her eyes were closed and sunken into an ashen shriveled miniature of a face. Her bony arms and clawlike fingers with long, thick yellow nails lay on top of the quilt. I stared at her until they told me she was dead.

A stifling combination of summer heat and the malodorous room was suddenly unbearably oppressive. I tried to hold my breath; it seemed as though to breathe would be to allow some part of death to enter my body. My legs would scarcely carry me outside and I felt as though I would be sick. When the door finally closed behind me, I took a deep breath of air to clear the stench of that room from my head and I ran.