

AGED ROSIE SULLIVAN'S DEATH.

Stabbing Herself in the Home of a Hospitable Family of Colored People.

The Cobbler's Knife with Razor Edge Which This Queen of Tramps Carried to "Defend Her Fair Fame."

The dead body of Rosie Sullivan lies at the morgue, with every prospect of finding a grave in Potter's Field, not that she hadn't a host of acquaintances but because the combined assets of those with whom she has most intimately associated during the past twenty years would not, if collected to-day, pay the hire of a hearse, much less the cost of a coffin.

Rosie was a tramp, a tramp who had grown old in the profession; a sort of queen of tramps, with a thousand trampish

friends. It was her custom to rest her head, a head silvered by more than sixty Winters, most of them cold Winters for Rosie, on the hard benches of the police station-houses, with gratitude for even those questionable accommodations. During the latter years of her life she had probably found lodgings gratis in every police station on this island.

It is, however, in Rosie's death, rather than in her aimless, wasted life, that material is found for this morning's "True

Story of the News." Had Rosie in the days of her youth, when patches of pink bloomed in her plump cheeks and laughter shone from her Irish blue eyes, been told that she would die among "naggurs," with only "naggurs" to say goodbye to her fleeing soul and fold the hands across her breast, she would probably have tossed her golden head in disdain of the idea. But Rosie's last friends, the only friends upon whom during the closing months of her life she could call without the certainty of being roughly told to "move on," were of the race which in her youth she despised.

The charity which was bestowed upon this old wail of the street by a woman of darker skin is of the sort which one reads about with a quickened action of the pulse and a quiver of the eyelids.

On the second floor of a little tumble-down frame house at No. 2339 Eighth avenue there lives a colored family named Hicks. Hicks pere is a carpet-shaker by profession, and there are several little Hickeys, with chocolate-colored faces and kinky hair, graduated in size from 7 feet 3 to 3 feet 2. There is also a Mrs. Hicks, to whom kindly people will do well to take off their hats should they meet her on the street. Mrs. Hicks is a shade darker than her children; she has a face as round and jolly as a sunflower, and a bosom the circumference of which seems immeasurable.

There are but three living apartments in the home of the Hickeys, and two of these rooms are but little larger than closets. It was in one of these rooms that Rosie Sullivan died on Saturday night. It grieves Mrs. Hicks to believe that Rosie, after all her kindness to her, deliberately inflicted the knife cut from which she bled to death. Kind-hearted Mrs. Hicks is more inclined to think that the wound was of accidental origin. At all events, the death of the white woman in the humble home of the colored family was a cruel ending to an almost unexampled task of charity.

The acquaintance between Mrs. Hicks and Rosie Sullivan began five months ago when the latter, looking scarcely able to stand, asked of the former, who happened to be at the door of her humble dwelling, "the loan of a tin can" in which to get a draught of beer. Mrs. Hicks noticed the gray hair of the shabby woman, and liked the blue eyes whose hungry years of dissipation had not obliterated.

Mrs. Hicks had no tin can available for the purpose, but she had a "clean little pitcher, and this she lent to her Celtic sister, with an injunction to return it when she had quenched her thirst. And Miss Sullivan did return it, with a little beer still lurking at the bottom, which she condescendingly, invited the "naggur" to drink.

Mrs. Hicks is not, however, a drinking woman, and after refusing the beer she explained to the elderly Rosie that it was pity for her feeble condition which induced the lending of the pitcher, but that she by no means countenanced the "working of the growler."

To this Rosie listened with something of her old-time sauciness and Irish independence; but that she took no offense at the "upstartishness" of the "naggur" was made apparent by a second visit. During the second call Mrs. Hicks gleaned from the older woman the fact that she was absolutely homeless; had been so for years and thought herself lucky when she found shelter in the "cop coops," as she called the station-houses.

It was a risky thing for Mrs. Hicks, the respectable mother of a growing family, to do, but a colored woman is nothing if not six-hearted, and one stormy night when poor old Rosie passed her door, after seeking in vain for shelter at the Harlem station-house, Mrs. Hicks invited her to share the humble Hicks residence for the night, "and to-morrow," said she, encouragingly, "you can try and find work." So Rosie stayed, and the dark-faced little Hicks children stared and Mr. Hicks growled.

After this, although Rosie did not exactly bring her trunk to the home of the Hickeys, she frequently put in an appearance after

sundown and was allowed to remain till morning.

It was in this impromptu fashion Rosie arrived at the Hicks home on Saturday evening last. Mrs. Hicks was pained to see that her visitor had been drinking, but was too kind-hearted to put her from the door on that account, and Rosie, seating herself by a window in the kitchen, soon fell into a deep slumber.

Shortly before 9 o'clock, just as Mrs. Hicks was thinking of putting the little folks to bed, but while they were still playing about the floor, their visitor arose with a start from her seat by the window and bounded out into the centre of the room.

"My dream has come true!" she shrieked in a tone that sent all the little Hicks brood skurrying to the shelter of their mamma's dress. There were also present in the room at the time Mr. Hicks and two young men employed by him as carpet-cleaners, named Joseph Beale and Norman Baker. At first it was thought that the woman was simply in a drunken frenzy, but presently as she stood wobbling from side to side a little crimson stream was seen flowing out upon the floor from beneath the hem of her dirty skirt.

Mr. Hicks, as has been said, is a carpet-cleaner by trade, but the blood-staining of his own carpet had no allurement for him. He therefore, assisted by his workmen, picked the Sullivan woman up bodily and

threw her upon a bed in the children's room. The blood now fairly spouted from her leg, in the calf of which, to the horror of the beholders, a short shoemaker's knife was seen to be imbedded.

One of the men ran in hot haste for a policeman, who fortunately was found near by, and the rest of the family endeavored to stop the flow of blood by putting salt upon the wound and bandaging the leg above the knee. The policeman, after a momentary glance at the bleeding woman, ran to the nearest telephone and called for an ambulance from the Manhattan Hospital.

The electric current between the telephone station and the hospital was erratic; it refused to do its duty and communicate the news it should have told. In the mean time the woman was bleeding to death. When it was at last ascertained that telephone communication was impossible a messenger was despatched to the hospital, but before the ambulance arrived Rosie had died—died surrounded only by her newly made colored friends.

The circumstances of the wounding were so incomprehensible to those in the room with the woman at the time the wound was inflicted, and their explanation of how it came about so unsatisfactory to the police, that Hicks and his two assistant carpet-cleaners were arrested and locked up for the

night, but, the following day, were allowed by the Coroner to go on parole.

In the mean time Mrs. Hicks was left for hours alone with the dead body and her terrified children. When she had sufficiently recovered her equanimity to think at all, she remembered that the old Irish woman had on one occasion exhibited to her a sharp shoemaker's knife, which she carried in a sheath beneath her stocking, "to protect me fair name, Mrs. Hicks," she had said, "for ye cannot tell what bad men will do to a lone woman." An old creature, sixty-two years of age, she was, with only a pair of big china-blue eyes to relieve the ugliness of a bloated face, but as vain of her charms and as fearful of insult as when she was a rosy-cheeked girl with a girl's battle to fight.

At the Hicks residence yesterday all was in confusion, with the cleansing of furniture and the removal of the cruel blood stains. The children were nearly in hysterics and Mrs. Hicks looked four years older, but nevertheless, she found it in her kind heart to say, "Poor old Rosie, she was a good-meaning soul. Perhaps she stuck the knife in her leg in her dream. I don't think she'd willingly cause me all this trouble and distress. I'm sorry we couldn't get the priest for her, poor thing! for, you know, the Irish always feel comforted with a priest when they die."