

HOW NEW YORK LOOKS FROM A DOWNTOWN ROOF

TO one used to smaller cities with their garden spaces, a visit to a New York roof situated in the lower section of the city was a novel experience. Just beneath our walls stretched a chain of "pocket handkerchief" back yards, strung with clothes lines and dotted with children, cats, and ash heaps. The windows looking out upon these premises wore a gala aspect with their rows of drying garments of varying hues, and adorned here and there by pitiful flower pots, principally planted with hope.

The afternoon was waning, and within these narrow openings many figures were visible, some leaning across the sills for a breath of fresh air, others reading by the failing light, and still others forced to ply an unceasing needle till the dark should render toil impossible.

But the most interesting view was afforded by the surrounding roofs, which seemed to have been transformed into nurseries, laundries, pleasure resorts, playgrounds, and other institutions generally supposed to be under roofs, and not above them.

Toward the north a woman with her head tied in a white cloth was beating rugs and scattering dust and germs upon an unsuspecting neighborhood. Presently she was joined in her occupation by a man, and the two, with their fore-shortened figures and their quaint head-dresses, assumed the appearance of Dutch marionettes automatically performing a sort of fantastic dance.

Across from them was a roof somewhat resembling the deck of a steamer with its pipes and hatchways. A woman emerged from one of the curious doorways and disappeared in another; a short, stout woman without appreciable waist line—the type who in Summer would swing a hammock on this upper deck and hum the latest ragtime to a fascinated male.

On a roof to westward a boy had set

his boat to dry, a neat, newly painted canoe named, "Hawk," and destined, no doubt, during the coming season to be the means of many a moonlight avowal. A small girl, more elf than child, was skipping gayly about the young man, apparently as much at home seven stories above the earth as are country children in their geranium-bordered gardens. Opposite to her another air baby was visible, a tinier baby clinging to its laborer father's hand and watching with solemn eyes the world hush to rest.

On the same street, nine stories above the pavement, stretched a truly beautiful roof, set with smooth stones and edged with a high, brick parapet. Here sweet-faced nuns paced to and fro, telling their beads or murmuring Matins.

On the flat top of a corner house was a squab farm, where two men with long poles were scattering a flock of indolent pigeons from their cherished perch. The birds soared upward, wheeled several times in a circle, and attempted to alight, but were prodded to fresh action, thus affording a pretty spectacle.

The sun now hung in a fiery globe above the Hudson, from whose waters a dusky haze arose, dulling the line of the distant shores and softening the perspective of the nearby buildings. As twilight gathered, the mist took on an amethyst tinge and gradually the practical metropolis assumed the mystery and charm of an Oriental painting.

Gazing upon the beautiful Metropolitan Tower, with its delicate symmetry and gilded dome, one could almost fancy a prophet of Allah standing on the balcony, facing the east and calling the people to prayer. But suddenly the street lamps flashed into light, the river boats shrilled their home-bound warnings, and at the edge of night our splendid figure of Liberty lifted her torch; dreams were changed into reality, and the panorama became that of the greatest city in the Western world.