

THE ROSE OF HOPE

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The Rose of Hope by Anonymous

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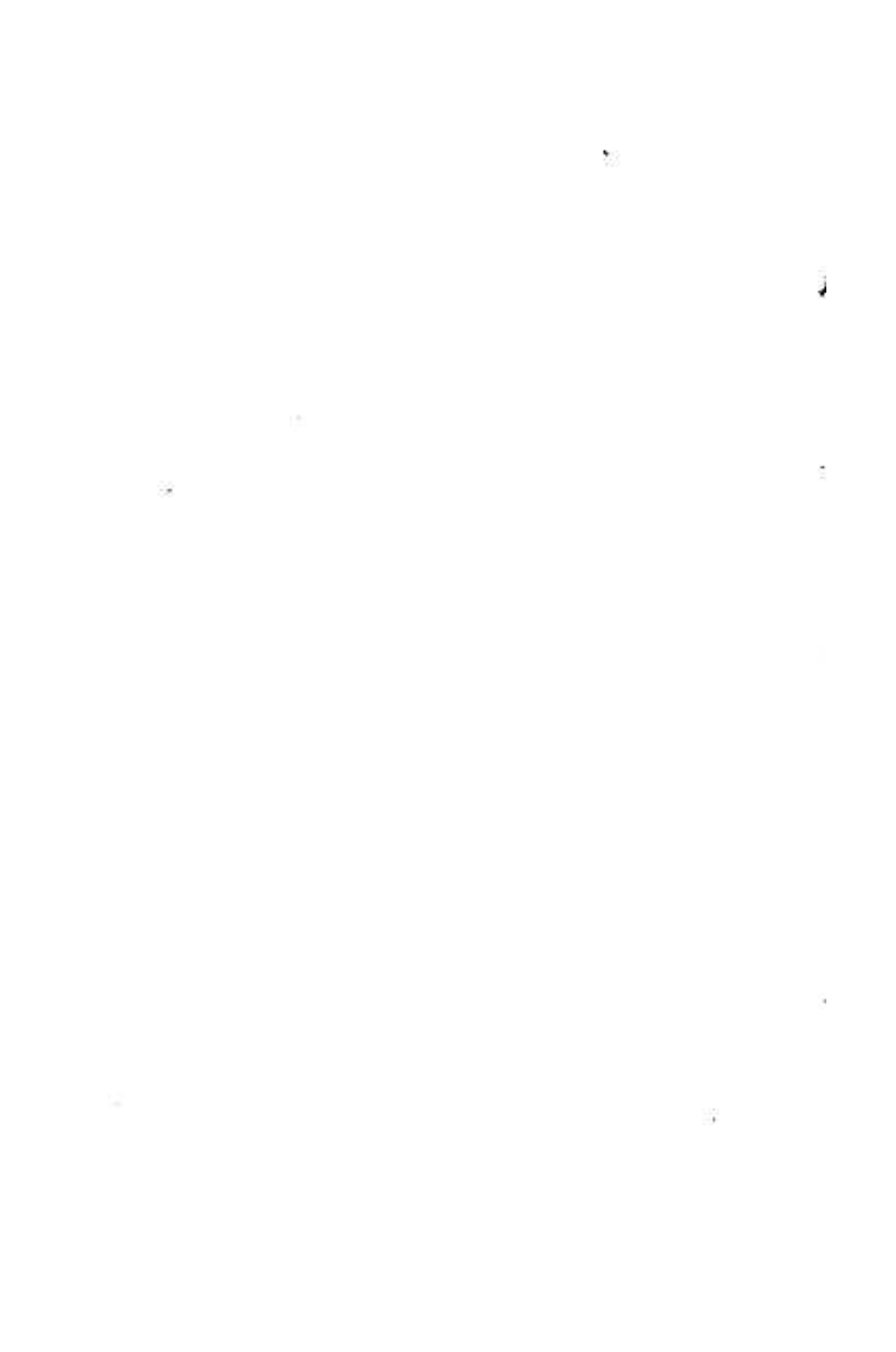
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OF HOPE**

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THE ROSE OF HOPE

CHRISTMAS MDCCCXCVI

THE ROSE OF HOPE

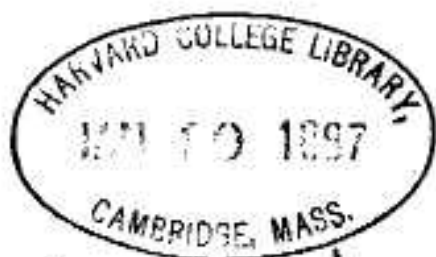


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Brown, Alice

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OW death came into the world! there is no more ancient mystery. But what man knows how death came first into his own soul, and grew and grew until all the leafage of invention must thereafter put forth in the shadow of it? Memories of that breeding-time of belief are vaguely outlined, though their bulk appalls and dominates. We cannot really go back to a phase when life was all life, and when its mysterious counterpart did not, as an overhung cloud, cast a shadow on the dial and, blurring the hour of day, suggest vaguely another bearing a significance we cannot name. Happy the child to whom death becomes familiar through some wise utterance from lips beloved: not too concrete an explanation of what shall not yet be explained, — the fruit of a cheerful sophistication, — but tenderly as the sunrise comes to reconcile us to that which is but may not be defined, and fold it in such mists of acquiescence that it shall not wholly alarm. Child-

hood alone has the perfect physical sense of continued being. The child is: from his untouched citadel of bodily security he cannot fancy an existence concluded. But one day, top-full of joy, the scheme of things too small to hold his bursting spirit, — he comes on death. Something that was born to share his bliss of motion lies there inert: his dog, perhaps, or the cold mate of the bird mourning on yonder bough. Vaguely perplexed, he contemplates a disease more potent than such as cripples the body; for, even to his untrained experience, something more vital than force and breath has deserted that most pathetic clay. What is this? he asks you. Death, you tell him. And there, if you be honest and conscious of your own unwisdom, you stand, and burden him with no poor guesswork; unless, indeed, some golden hour has struck from which you may speak with the authority of a regnant hope. But not even thus shall you spare him his apprenticeship of pain. Thereafter the mysterious phantasm, grisly or beneficent as fate has ordered, starts up before him out of a thousand leafy coverts and in homely household ways. He wakes at night, the sweat of horror thick upon him, and grapples with the fear of death, — not for himself, but his beloved. For at last he has learned how stealthily they can slip away,