

STORIES
POETRY

The Inglenook

SKETCHES
TRAVEL

A PREMEDITATED TRIUMPH.

By Hilda Richmond.

"But you know nothing of what the country is like," persisted the young man. "Really, Helen, don't you think it childish to hear only one side of a case and then decide?"

"I know all I want to know," said the young lady, positively. "You gave me the impression that you intended to establish an office here in the city and now want to take me to a lonely farm. I should die of homesickness besides making you miserable, so it is best for us not to try the experiment."

"Mother is old and feeble, dear, and it would not be for long. The few years she has left she wants to spend in her old home and I must take care of her. You don't mean what you just said, do you?" Arthur Hanly spoke quietly, but there was intense feeling in his few words.

"You must choose between us," said Helen Walters, firmly. "If you think your duty to your mother higher than your love for me, then it is well I found it out before it was too late."

Without a word the young man left the house and took the first train for his boyhood home, where his aged mother awaited him. The young lady refused to acknowledge the ache in her heart as she plunged into a round of pleasures, because she felt sure her lover would come back speedily, but she could not realize the material of which he was made.

Sore at heart, Arthur Hanly took up his new work, but his mother never suspected the disappointment he endured. The loss of his cherished profession, the giving up of Helen and the very quiet life he was forced to lead on account of his mother's health, all told on him, but the dear, failing eyes saw nothing of his misery those first few months. Then the long summer days, the hard work and the health-giving air brought new life and hope to his troubled spirit. The joy of doing his duty and the calm but busy life restored his poise, and made him just what his mother was sure he always had been—a true and contented gentleman.

All this time Helen was amusing herself in her own way and trying to imagine she was very fortunate not to be shut up in a dreary farm house. "I might have been able to stand it a year or two," she said to herself, musingly one day. "I wonder if Arthur will come back to the city when his mother is gone!"

Her friends openly congratulated her on her good sense and told doleful stories of country women going insane from loneliness and hard work, when they thought she might be fretting about her lost lover. They brought her books describing the condition of country people, and were ready to support their statements by pointing to the crowds of young men and women who leave their farm homes never to return. In a few months Helen was firmly convinced that Arthur had been very selfish in asking such a tremendous sacrifice of her, and she determined to forget him entirely.

"I am afraid you will be so disappointed, dear," said Rose Adams the instant she welcomed Helen to her comfortable city home the day before Thanksgiving. "Cousin Fanny has determined to have every connection of the family present at her family dinner and we must take you with us, for she would listen to nothing else. She has it in her mind that she will not live through the winter and she wants to have one more family gather-

ing in the old home. It would be all right, but she lives in the country, and I am afraid that will awaken unpleasant memories for you."

"Let me stay at home!" begged Helen. "I won't mind it a bit."

But Mrs. Adams would listen to no such thing. Her dearest girl friend and maid of honor should not be left alone even for a few hours, so Helen had to submit. "It won't be long," she told herself, as she toasted her slippers before the grate in her room that evening. "How dreadful it must be to live where people eat with their knives and murder the English language."

"You must promise us, Miss Helen, not to fall in love with any of our cousins to-day," said Mr. Adams as they started out in the crisp November air. "Cousin Fanny has a son who is quite a fine young fellow, so I think it is my duty to warn you. I hear that he is paying a great deal of attention to a certain person, so—"

"Don't worry," laughed Helen, while Mrs. Adams trod on her husband's foot and telegraphed to him in the code known to young married people. "There is no danger. I wouldn't live in the country for anything, and it is hardly likely I will fall in love at first sight."

"Isn't the air delightful this morning?" asked Mrs. Adams, to change the subject. "Did you ever see anything more beautiful than that long stretch of meadow with the sunshine on it?"

"It is beautiful," said Helen in surprise. "And the houses look fairly respectable, don't they?"

"I don't see any signs of poverty," said Mr. Adams. "You'll probably be astonished at the dinner to-day, Miss Helen."

"No, I won't," said that young lady positively. "I was reading an article in a magazine the other day describing farm life, and I know just what to expect. The writer told of the salt pork and heavy pies and soda biscuits that farmers use. I know just how the women will look, for they were described perfectly as sallow, listless creatures with no thought above the price of butter and eggs. It made me shudder to read of their narrow, barren lives, and I expect to have a day of real thanksgiving because my lot has fallen in a civilized place."

"You'd better keep an eye on her just the same, Rose," said Mr. Adams thoughtfully. "I've heard girls talk before and this may be all a bluff. I don't know how Cousin Fanny would like a city girl for a daughter, but it isn't best to run any risks unless—"

"John!" exploded Mrs. Adams, "what is the matter with you this morning? I thought you promised me to behave before we started. I shall be on pins and needles all day if you talk like this."

"I was merely saying what might happen before the day was over," said Mr. Adams in an injured tone. "You said yourself there was no tell—"

"Here we are!" interrupted Mrs. Adams in a relieved tone. "There is Cousin Fanny coming out to meet us."

"I am very glad to see you, dear," said a gentle voice, and Helen found herself staring at an old lady in a grey silk dress and white apron with her white hair drawn smoothly back from her brow. "My son will be home from one of the neighbors presently. They have a sick child and he had to go there early this morning."

Once in the big farm house Helen continued to stare. The old oak and mahogany furniture had probably been in use for years, but it was more substantial looking and elegant than the copies of colonial models the young lady saw everywhere in city homes. She glanced about for the coffin plates

and wax flowers on the parlor walls, but was astonished to find a few good pictures instead. The glimpse of the dining room she caught through the open door showed a long table gleaming, the house was comfortably filled and Helen sat as in a daze. The well-dressed, prosperous men and women greeted her kindly, but she could not reconcile her ideas to the scene before her. All at once the voice of her hostess sounded in her ear and she looked up to see Arthur Hanly standing before her.

"My son, Miss Walters," said the old lady proudly. "He came home only a few minutes ago."

"How do you do, Miss Walters?" said the young man courteously, as if they were meeting for the first time. "I am glad to welcome you to my home."

"Helen," said Mrs. Adams, coming up before the young lady could speak. "Don't you want to help me with the table decorations? Cousin Fanny would like a heap of fruit and flowers for each table. Arthur, they want your assistance in the kitchen."

Helen did not know whether to feel relieved or otherwise to be hurried away to the dining room, but a sharp pain shot through her heart as she saw Arthur helping a very pretty girl with some vegetables in the kitchen. Rose Adams was sorry for the unhappy girl and tried to shield her all she could by keeping up a lively chatter about the guests, but Helen longed to go home at once.

"Did you ever see anything like this in the city, Miss Helen?" asked Mr. Adams, as he surveyed the long tables ready for the guests. "Did you ever see such a layout anywhere before?"

"I never did," said Helen truthfully. "Actually I am too astonished for words. Where did your cousin get all this food?"

"Don't ask me," said the young man. "I've been here time and again, and they always serve just this much. If you can find two square inches of unoccupied space on that table, I'll stop teasing all day."

"I'm going to help wait on the guests," Helen, said Mrs. Adams, "and John will take you to dinner. Now, John, I expect you to remember your promise," she went on severely. "You know you said—"

"I'll be too busy eating to get into trouble," said Mr. Adams consolingly. "Don't look at me like that, Rose. You frighten me."

"I only wish I could," said his wife anxiously.

Helen felt sure the first mouthful would choke her, but she was surprised to find herself enjoying the turkey, chicken pie and vegetables with which her plate was heaped. Perhaps the sight of the pretty young girl whom Arthur had been helping, and who now was seated beside a young man, apparently her lover, had something to do with her return of appetite, for Arthur escorted his mother to the table and then took up his duties of serving the guests.

"Is this your first Thanksgiving in the country, Miss Walters?" asked one of the guests.

"Yes," answered the young girl rather faintly, fearing what might follow.

"I can guess your feelings then," said the lady merrily. "I was brought up in the city myself, and I used to regard the country as a howling wilderness. I remember the arguments Charles used to put up to induce me to come to the farm. He was consumptive then and a mere skeleton, though you wouldn't think so now," and she glanced at the sturdy man at her side. "At last he had the good sense to get me an invitation to a country home