

STORIES
POETRY

The Inglenook

SKETCHES
TRAVEL

HE HAD OUTGROWN IT.

"About how many people have you here?" asked Rossman, as they stepped from the depot platform to the boardwalk that led up Main street.

"Something over a thousand," answered Harris.

"Pretty little place," said Rossman with an amused, patronizing smile.

He knew that such places existed, of course, for he had seen them from the window of a Pullman, but for thirty years he had scarcely realized there were places without pavement, electric lights, street cars, cable and automobiles.

"Well, hello, Jake."

"Hello, Harris."

It was a countryman who had come up and stood talking to Rossman's companion. The great man—he was a millionaire—felt an affront to his importance to be kept waiting on a street crossing while two men talked about nothing, apparently. So far as he could understand, there was no trade up between them. They were merely talking.

Rossman wondered if Harris fully appreciated his importance; if he knew that with a stroke of the pen he could buy a dozen towns like that.

"A customer?" he asked as they went on up the street.

"Oh, no," said Harris. "A fellow from over the creek I had not seen for several weeks."

"You see," said Rossman, when they had reached Harris' office, "your way of handling this local branch of our plow business has attracted the attention of the Board."

"And as I was passing through on my way home from California, decided to drop off between trains and look into your methods myself."

"I shall be pleased to give you any information I can," said Harris.

He was a smooth-faced, clean, frank-looking man of forty, and his matter-of-fact acceptance of the president of the company rather stung the millionaire. He was used to deference from those under him.

When the business was finished they were told at the depot that, on account of a wreck, it would not be possible for Mr. Rossman to get out before the next morning.

Harris invited him to spend the night at his home.

It was a six-room cottage set well back in a broad, grassy yard.

Mrs. Harris shook hands with him in a friendly, neighborly way. She was a pleasant-faced, amiable-looking woman, and, although she had not expected company, made him welcome, and soon had supper ready.

It amused Rossman, "this primitive fashion of living," as he called it. The food was all set on the table, and was passed from one to the other. There were no waiters, no servants of any kind, so far as he could see.

But he admitted that the food tasted good, and that the spirit of the family was bright and happy.

It seemed queer—just as it had when Harris talked to the countryman—that they actually like to talk to each other.

"Mr. Rossman," said Harris after supper, "we are going to prayer meeting. Would you like to come along, or would you prefer to remain here?"

He said he would go along, repeating to himself, "When in Rome, do as the Romans do."

He sauntered out into the yard, that they might not see his mirth over the situation.

"Prayer meeting," he chuckled to himself. "Well, R. T. Rossman, that is a good one on you."

The prayer meeting was a simple, friendly group of men and women, and a few young people.

Rossman noted again, with surprise, that they seemed actually glad to see each other. He tried to remember how long it had been since he had met and had a friendly visit with any man who had nothing whatever to do with his business.

They sang some songs. One read from the Scriptures. They discussed the passage in an informal way, and then several prayed.

The millionaire had heard, and said many sarcastic things about long-faced praying hypocrites. He had probably come to believe what he said.

But he was honest enough to admit these people did not appear in that light. They seemed, for the most part, singularly frank and sincere.

They prayed for each other, for some sick neighbor, for the unsaved, and even for the stranger within the gate, and his absent loved ones.

"Absent loved ones," he repeated to himself, and smiled half sneeringly at the thought of that term being applied to the grand lady who rules his palace.

When they returned to the house Mrs. Harris played on the piano and it sounded uncommonly like music.

"You know," said Rossman when all but he and Harris had retired, "that is the first time I have been to prayer meeting in thirty years. A fellow soon out grows that kind of thing when he goes to the city."

"Or grows away from it, perhaps," quietly amended Harris.

"No," corrected Rossman, resuming his superior air, "outgrows it. When a man comes into contact with the world and in touch with progressive thought he loses his taste for the old, outgrown theories of religion."

"Yes," said Harris, "he often loses his taste for it, but a man may lose his taste without outgrowing it. He may be sick, for instance, or let a worse taste take its place."

"Why, take my club at home for instance. There are a hundred of the leading business men of the country. They know the world. They are shrewd and keen. How many of those men, do you imagine, would believe in a thing like that to-night? They would laugh until their sides ached if they knew I had been to prayer meeting. No sir, we have outgrown it."

"In what way?" asked Harris.

"Oh, every way," said Rossman. "We have advantages in the city, you know, that you fellows never dream of."

"Is it books?" asked Harris.

"No, not necessarily books," he replied, glancing uneasily at the well-filled shelves of books. There were other well-used ones upon the table. This was a subject to be avoided. The millionaire had not read a book in twenty years.

"But, you know, the great scientists and lecturers come to the city."

"Who did you hear last year?" asked Harris.

"Well, I didn't hear any. Haven't time."

"It is educationally?" asked Harris.

"Not, not in schools. The best education, you know, comes from experience." This was another touchy point. Rossman's education had ended with the high school.

"Is it magazines, or daily papers?" asked Harris, a smile lurking around his mouth.

"Oh, no, no, busy men have little time for such stuff."

"I see," said Harris. "It is business. Your superior wisdom in spiritual things was gained in handling the International Sulky Plow."

It was not said sarcastically, but as a philosopher might have spoken a truth.

Rossman made no reply.

Harris had almost forgotten the incident, when, one day, a personal letter came from the president of his company. It said: "Since that night with you I have faced the truth, and I have studied myself and the men about me. You were right about it."—Advance.

PAT TO THE RESCUE.

No truer friends exist than Bounce and Pat. Bounce is a little brindle dog with no pride of ancestry. Pat, a Maltese cat, got his name because he first saw the light on St. Patrick's Day.

These playmates and allies were on the front porch of their master's home when a big automobile passed. In the front seat were a young man and a girl; behind them sat upright a big bulldog, which glared around combatively. The bulldog spied the peaceful Bounce and Pat, and jumping from the auto, dashed straight toward the porch.

"Another victim for Boxer," loudly laughed the girl.

The cautious Pat, seeing Boxer's swift approach, flew up a piazza post to await developments. The hospitable little Bounce stood wagging his ignoble little tail to welcome the stranger. Boxer, who was named after the Chinese ruffians, sprang at Bounce, seized his ear, and while the poor little mongrel kiyyed supplicatingly, dragged him down the steps to the lawn. Then the bulldog silenced Bounce by gripping his throat.

Brave Pat realized that if ever Bounce needed his friend's aid it was then. Pat dropped noiselessly to the porch, measured the distance in a flash, and, straining every muscle, jumped. He landed fair on Boxer's back, and, digging his claws through hair and hide, hung on and got his balance. There never was a cat more industrious. Pat tore out hair and flesh "by the handful," ripped, gouged and bit, until Boxer's back and face were covered with gory hieroglyphics which might have been a Chinese decoration of war. The terrified bulldog dropped Bounce, rolled over again and again, ran in circles, jumped up and squirmed, but whenever he got on his feet Pat was in the saddle and clamping; and there he remained at work.

When Boxer, yelping, ran after the auto, Pat rode awhile to give the finishing touches. Bounce plucked up courage and pursued. Nearing the auto Pat sprang from his unwilling steed, and he and Bounce ran home. There they laid down on the porch again. Perhaps the sun was shining in Pat's eye, but the master of the pair declares he saw the cat wink at Bounce.—Selected.

ONLY A PENNY.

A little boy proposed to put a penny in the box for missions. His sister told him it would be useless to make so small a gift, saying it would never be noticed among the large contributions of others. He gave the penny, however, and when the collectors reported a collection of £8 5s. 1d., he whispered to his sister:

"There! that's my penny; you said it was so little it would never be noticed, and the gentleman has told the whole congregation about it!"

Better is the man who is slow of speech than he who is ready of utterance, for he shall have fewer things to regret.