

STORIES
POETRY

The Inglenook

SKETCHES
TRAVEL

A BLESSING IN DISGUISE.

(By Mary I. Houston.)

"Oh, dear! I know it is going to be just awful away out there," exclaimed Marjorie Clark, as she stared vacantly out of the window of the train that was fast leaving behind all traces of the city and whirling through a barren country, where here and there a lonely little farm house appeared. "It's getting worse all the time. I don't think it's fair to make us leave the city now."

"Now, Marjorie, do try and bear up better for your father's sake. You are making him feel very badly and he has enough to bear already. I know it is hard for you to give up your lessons and everything just now, but perhaps in a year or so we will be able to send you back again to take up your music. Now be a brave girl and look on the brighter side of things," and her mother stroked the braids of bright brown hair that fell over Marjorie's shoulders.

Marjorie's father, the Rev. David Clark, had been for years the minister in one of the city churches. Never a strong man, his health had lately broken down and he had been ordered by the doctors to seek a change in some country place.

It had been a bitter struggle for him to give up the congregation that he had grown to love, but he had done it, and now they were on the way to the little village of Horton in an out of the way part of the country. Frank, the twelve-year-old boy, was wild with excitement, at the thought of going to a new place, and could hardly wait for the time to start, but Marjorie felt no such delight. It meant giving up all her school friends as well as her precious violin lessons and she felt that she was being unfairly dealt with.

"Say! we will soon be there, only two more stations now," said Frank, coming in from the baggage car, where he had been attending to the wants of a fox terrier that he was bringing with him. The conductor says it is not such a bad place, though pretty wild. There was a bear shot there two years ago too! My, won't it be great if I can get a chance at a bear?"

"Oh, do be quiet, Frank," said Marjorie. "You need not make matters any worse by telling me about bears. It's bad enough now."

"And don't be a baby, Sis. You'll like it all right, even if you don't get your precious violin lessons," and Frank was off again to interview the conductor, who had taken quite a fancy to the bright lad.

"Torton Station!" called the conductor, and the Clarks gathered up their luggage and stepped out on the platform.

"Isn't it great?" said Frank. "Just look at the woods over there and the

crooked little street and tumble down houses. We'll have lots of fun here."

"You may think so, but I can't tell you I don't," said his sister. And it was really not to be wondered at that the girl spoke as she did, for the view from the station platform was anything but pleasant.

"Come, children, the manse is only a short distance off, so we can walk," said Mrs. Clark. "Frank, take your dog, and that satchel the bigger things can go in that waggon."

When they saw the manse Marjorie's heart sank lower than ever. The crooked street and little stores had been bad enough, but to think that this dilapidated place was to be their home! The paint was nearly all off and the window panes many of them were gone. Even the cheerful Mrs. Clark felt depressed at the sight of the place.

"Never mind, children," she said, "just see what we can do to the old place before long. We'll plant a few vines and cut the grass and then when a coat of paint is given the house, you won't know it."

"It is a pity that the last pastor was not a married man and had lived here. The house is spoiling for want of a tenant," said the minister as he opened the creaking gate and ushered his little family into the front yard.

It was too late that day to do anything toward getting the house in order, but the next morning all were at work early getting things ready. Even Marjorie forgot her grievances in the excitement of putting the furniture in, and by bed time the inside of the manse at last presented a very much changed appearance. By the end of a week no one would have recognized the old house and the Clarks were agreeably surprised at the number of nice people there were in the congregation.

Frank, boylike, was already acquainted with nearly every one in the village and Marjorie, though she held herself much aloof, had to confess that she did not find Norton such a dull place after all.

"Marjorie, dear," said her mother one morning, when they had been several weeks in their new home, "I have such a headache this morning and think I shall lie down. Will you take these books over to old Mr. Dalby? He is unable to walk now and has to be alone so much, that he will enjoy them, and perhaps you will stay and talk to him for a little while."

"Oh, mother, I don't know him, and I hate talking to sick people anyway. I'll just leave the books at the door and come away."

"Very well, but I wish you would go in and see him."

Marjorie took the books and walked slowly down the street. "Perhaps I

had better go in for a minute, but I really cannot stay and talk to him. He always looks so cross," she said to herself.

When she reached the little gate her courage almost forsook her, but she went up to the door.

"Come in," came the response to her timid rap.

"Oh, I thought it was the minister's wife. She promised me some books. Won't you sit down?"

"Mother was not well and couldn't come, so I brought them."

"It is good of you to take the trouble for a lonely old man. All that I can do now is to read or play upon my violin."

"Your violin? Do you play the violin?" said Marjorie.

"Yes, child; until I met with the accident that rendered me so helpless, I made my living by playing and by giving lessons. I lived in a large city then; here no one cares to hear me play."

"Oh, sir," exclaimed Marjorie, "would you please play a little for me? I try to play the violin too, but since I have left the city I fear I shall forget it all."

"No true musician ever forgets," said the old man, as he drew his violin case toward him and taking out the violin began to play the most beautiful strains that Marjorie had ever heard.

"Come to me when you can, child, and I will give you a lesson if you care to have it."

"Care?" Why that was what she was longing for. Nearly every day through the long summer found Marjorie Clark at the little cottage, and the old man almost forgot his pain in the pleasure of giving lessons again.

"Mother," said Marjorie one day, "I guess it was God's will that we should come here after all. I have learned far more than I could ever have done in the city. And I have learnt more than music from Mr. Dalby. He has taught me a lesson of patience and submission. God's plans aren't always ours, are they? What I thought was a trial was a blessing in disguise."

Cannington.

Looking over the storm-swept Pentland Firth, with its dangerous rocks and fierce currents, I remarked to the Orkney pilot. "This must be a great place for wrecks."

"Wracks, man!" he shouted; "there's mony a braw farm in Orkney got out o' wracks, but the Breetish Government has put a leethoose here, and a leet loose there and yon," pointing to the double lighthouse on the Skerries, "yon's twa there is no chance of wracks for a pur fisher body noo."

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