

The Inglenook.

FOR DOMINION PRESBYTERIAN.

The Prodigal's Return.

BY MARY L. HOUSTON.

"Say, Mister are you a tramp?" Lottie Ellis, her face smiling and flushed from a romp with Speckles, the pretty spotted calf that her grandfather had given her, for her very own, a few weeks before, and her pink sunbonnet pushed back enough to show a tangled mass of bright brown curls, stopped and looked earnestly at the man who stood gazing toward the white farmhouse. The man started at the unexpected question, "A tramp? Well I guess that's about the size of it; I look pretty much like one, don't I?" he answered with a short bitter laugh that was not pleasant to hear.

"Yes, I think you do," said Lottie with a wise nod of her little head; "only your face is kind of clean and most tramps never wash theirs, Phil says. Phil is my brother, he's fourteen and knows all about tramps and everything," she added by way of explanation.

The tramp gave a curious start which the child failed to notice and then turned and stared fixedly at the white farmhouse, his elbows resting on the top bar of the gate.

"Are you awful tired and hungry mister?" she asked after he had been silent for some time.

"Oh, I beg your pardon, I almost forgot that you were there, little girl, and I—" "Well if you aren't the very queerest kind of a tramp. You are not a really truly one, are you? For they don't ever say 'beg your pardon' or anything polite. Why some of them won't even say 'thank you' when mamma gives them something to eat."

"Yes, I'm a 'really truly' one and a prodigal to boot. Do you know what that is?"

"Oh yes. That's the person who eats fattened calves and things and then gets a nice ring and a robe. Why don't you go home now and get them? Haven't you got any home?"

The man laughed again in the same bitter way and then said so fiercely as to almost frighten the little girl: "You talk too much, child, I have no home now and even if I had there are some prodigals who can never return, who cannot break the shackles nor abandon the husks. I'm one of them."

"Oh, I didn't know. I thought they all could if they wanted to. I can't read very good myself but I thought it said so in the Bible, doesn't it? Grandpa often reads it and he always prays about prodigals too, though I don't believe he knows any. I'd try it if I were you. I know if brother Phil was a prodigal he'd come back. But I hope he doesn't be one," she hastened to add, "for I'd hate to kill Speckles and she's the only calf we've got just now."

The man didn't answer but something in his look made Lottie think that she had better leave him; so, pulling forward her sunbonnet, she climbed over the gate and ran up the lane. As the tramp gazed after her his face softened and a suspicious moisture formed in his brown eyes, as he turned and trudged along the dusty road again.

Lottie thought of the tramp several times during the day and once ventured to the gate in search of him, carrying under her pinafore a slice of bread and jam that her mother had given her, but she could see nothing of him—"I guess the prodigal has

gone home to get the calf and things," she said, as she turned away and put her own white teeth into the bread and jam.

There were strange things happening at the Ellis farm late that night but Lottie, far in the land of dreams, knew nothing of what passed. She wondered a little that no one was around to help her dress in the morning but she managed fairly well for herself and then ran down stairs to breakfast. At the door she stopped and a look of disappointment chased the smiles from her face for, seated in the kitchen, in earnest conversation with her grandfather, was her prodigal tramp.

"Oh Mr. Tramp, I thought you had gone home for all the good things I told you about. I was sure you would, but you haven't gone yet."

"Haven't I though, little preacher? Ask your grandfather about it."

Lottie gazed in wonder from one to the other and then to her mother who looked unusually happy as she prepared breakfast. Grandpa drew the little girl to his knee and stroking the rebellious curls, that she had quite forgotten to brush, his voice shook as he spoke.

"Yes he has returned, darling. The words of a little girl that I know sent the prodigal home and your Uncle Philip has promised never to leave me now."

"Really truly? Are you my Uncle Phil who went away when I was a tiny baby? Oh I'm so glad," and then a thought striking her suddenly her face clouded again as she added with quivering lips, "but do you—do you need to kill a fattened calf? Speckles is pretty fat but I love her so much, wouldn't something else do?"

It was years since Philip Ellis had laughed as he did then and Grandpa's trembling voice joined his.

Lottie never fully understood how she had been instrumental in bringing Uncle Phil back, how, just as he had come to look upon for the last time and perhaps to curse, his old home before leaving the country forever, the erring son had been touched by the child's words; and how he had fought out there upon the road, a battle with himself in which right had triumphed. If she had heard all this she would not have understood, but she did know that grandpa was made happy by the return of a lost son and that the prodigal dispensed with some of the good things and spared her "Speckles."

How Harold Found a Home.

BY ERNEST GILMOUR.

It was a "red-letter" day in Harold's life when he was told that he was to have an outing—two weeks in the country. Whether he was Harold Brown or Harold Jones or Harold Smith or Harold something else I do not know. He was known in the slums simply as Harold. He had been an orphan as long back as he could remember. His home—if the wretched back room in which he lived could be thus designated—was in the most dismal part of the slums. He shared it with an old rag collector, who had no love for him, but was glad to give him bread and board for his assistance. Harold's bed was a bundle of rags (as was his employer's) and his board—for the greater part—scraps,

"Old Jake" the rag collector, made life lively for Harold in one respect, cursing at him and calling him vile names, and—even at times using a lash. Could you have seen the boy's emaciated and bruised body you would have wept. Could you have known of the sorrow and longing in his heart it would have made yours ache. But at last there came a break in the dark clouds over Harold's head. He had been asked to go to the country. The old rag collector would not consent to Harold's going, but as he had no claim on the child, the latter was taken from him. For the first time in his remembrance he was thoroughly cleansed and neatly dressed. It was noon when he in company with nine other children and a caretaker, left the city in a trolley car. At three they reached the terminus of the road, where there were carriages in waiting.

A few days before Harold was asked to go to the country an old couple sat on the porch of a small house talking earnestly. They had outlived their children and found life lonely. The old man was rheumatic and really often needed young hands to help him with the chores.

"Samuel," said his wife, "the Hunts are going to take two fresh air children—did you know it?"

"Yes 'Liza, Tom Hunt told me about it to-day, and there are two going to Silas Greer's, two girls, Tom said. I wish we could take a boy," wistfully.

"Do you really mean it, Samuel?" her face lighting up. "Would you like to take a boy?"

The old man laughed softly.

"I'd like to have a boy around for a week or two just to see how it would seem, and I'd like to give that boy a good time. I'd like some poor little homeless chap—an orphan—who doesn't know what a good time means."

His face lighted up for a moment and then the light faded.

"But it won't do," he added, "it won't do."

"What won't do?" the old lady asked.

"It wouldn't do to take a boy—it would make too much extra work for you—cooking and so on."

"I'd like the extra work," was the answer, "I'd like cooking for a hungry boy."

Her face glowed at the thought. His caught the glow.

"Would you?" he said, "then let the boy come."

And the boy came—it was Harold. Samuel Swift sent the message through the agency of Tom Hunt.

"Ask for a boy who has never had a good time," was the message.

Perhaps there never was a more surprised boy than Harold was when the Swifts welcomed him. He had not looked for a welcome, but when the old man took his hands in a gentle but close clasp and the old woman kissed his cheek and smiled upon him, a new world dawned. A lump came into his throat and choked him so that he could not find his voice, but when the lump disappeared joy was born. The Swifts were not rich, but they were in "comfortable circumstances," to use an old-fashioned phrase. They owned the small cottage in which they had lived all their married lives and the few acres of good land around it. They always had the best of food. Best of all, they were truly good and it was characteristic of them both to be ever ready and willing to lend a hand to anyone in trouble. The moment they looked into the face of their small guest they knew that life had been hard to him. Had a guest come to them from the upper